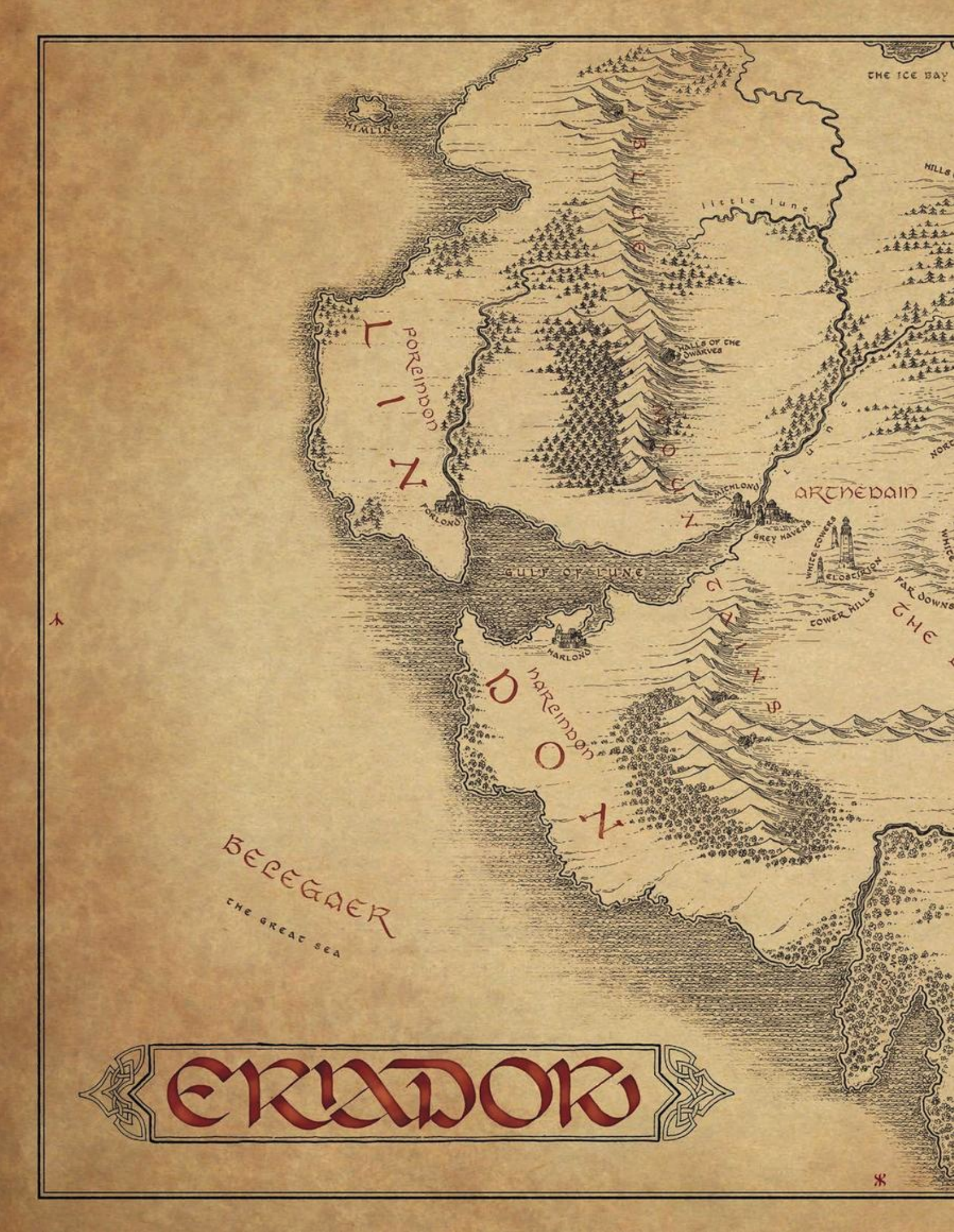
FREE LEAGUE

THE ONE RING™

Tales from the Lone-lands


THE ICE BAY
HIMLIN
little lune
HILLS
HALLS OF THE DWARVES
FORLOND
FOREINDON
MITHLOND
ARTHEDAIN
GREY HAVENS
WHITE TOWERS
ELOSTIRION
TOWER HILLS
FAR DOWNS
GULF OF LUNE
HARLOND
HARETHDON
BELEGAER
THE GREAT SEA
ERIADOR

THE OLD WITCH-REALM OF ANGMAR
THE LONE-LANDS
NORTH DOWNS
RHUDAUR
ANNUMINAS
FORNOST
WEATHER HILLS
TROLLSHAWS
HIGH PASS
RIVENDELL
FORDS OF BRUINEN
THE SHIRE
BREE
BRANDYWINE BRIDGE
MIDDLEWATER MARSHES
WEATHERTOP
the great east road
OLD FOREST
BARROW-DOWNS
SOUTH DOWNS
the Greenway
BARN FORD
the angle
loudwater
hoarwell
CARDOLAN
EREGION
HOLLIN
LOST REALM OF ARNOR
THARBAD
redhorn pass
west gate
east gate
ORC-IN-EDHIL
MORIA
LORIEN
swanfleet
silverlode
north-south road
MINHIRIATH
ENEDWAITH
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FANGORN
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INTRODUCTION

"The quest has failed, Sam. Even if we get out of here, we can't escape. Only Elves can escape. Away, away, out of Middle-earth, far away over the Sea. If even that is wide enough to keep the Shadow out."

"No, not everything, Mr. Frodo. And it hasn't failed, not yet."

Tales from the Lone-lands contains six adventures set in the Lone-lands of north-western Middle-earth. This volume is intended for Loremasters, who can weave the material presented among these pages into their current campaigns. Players should refrain from reading to avoid spoiling their experience.

Each adventure contains a number of sequential parts, as well as a Landmark of some sort. These Landmarks conform to the format of presentation outlined on page 221 of *The One Ring*. As with any roleplaying game adventure, it's entirely possible — even likely! — that the players will come up with some unexpected plan or take some action that the text has not anticipated. The Loremaster should use the material in this volume as suggestions, guidelines and inspiration, not a set script. The game always takes precedence over both the text as presented and the Tolkien canon.

OVERVIEW

All adventures presented in this volume can be played individually, but are connected to a larger tale.

A Troll-hole, if Ever There Was One and *Kings of Little Kingdoms* are both relatively self-contained, but still hint at the growing danger.

Messing About in Boats gives one of the Player-heroes in the Company an ancient lineage, a magical weapon — and a duty to fight the Shadow.

Not to Strike Without Need and *Wonder of the Northern World* follow the slow infiltration of spies from Mordor.

Finally, *The Quest of Amon Guruthos* challenges the heroes to battle an ancient evil, and face the Shadow of Death beneath the Hill of Fear.

While the adventures are presented in a suggested order of play, they can be shuffled around somewhat. *Messing About in Boats* includes more enchantment and magical strangeness than most with its tale of ghosts, ancient heroes and prophecies. Depending on the tastes of the playing group, the Loremaster may choose to run this earlier in the campaign (to give the players a hint of Middle-earth's wonder and epic history) or later (to mark a shift from relatively mundane tales of Outlaws and Trolls to those of magic and terror). *Not to Strike Without Need* leads into *Wonder of the Northern World,* which in turn leads into *The Quest of Amon Guruthos*, but there's space between these tales to intersperse other adventures if desired.

All adventures assume that the time frame is the same as the one in *The One Ring* — the years around 2965.

The Lone-lands of Eriador

The dark lord lifts his hand
Over dead sea and withered land.

Wide are the lands of the old North-kingdom, where the sea-wind howls over stony hills and bends the grasses of the empty plains. It plays amid the ruins of cities and the barrows of kings, and whistles in the mountaintops of the east. Ask the wind for tidings, maybe, for you will seldom meet travellers in the Lone-lands of Eriador.

But if you know where to look — under the hills and in hidden valleys, along the old roads and the secret refuges, the guarded lands of Shire and Bree — then there are still dwellers in the Lone-lands west of the mountains, east of the sea. They are few in number, for these are wounded lands, ravaged by forgotten wars and plague, beset by foes in days of old, but for the most part they are friendly folk. Ask them for tales, and they have tales aplenty — merry tales of foolery and misadventure, tales of ancient kings and heroes, tales of adventure in far-off lands. A fire may warm a traveller's cold feet, but it's story and song shared among friends that warms the heart. Find those who yet dwell in the Lone-lands, and you will hear tales to stave off the dread of night.

Wide are the lands, too, between Eriador and Mordor, where the Shadows lie, and while vague rumour has come up the Greenway of war in far-off Gondor, the folk of Eriador still sleep untroubled, believing the Enemy pays no heed to them.

They are wrong. Agents of Mordor are moving, creeping north to stir up sleeping evils and prepare the land for the war to come. A dark time is coming, a final war to put all the realms of the Free Peoples under the Shadow and plunge the land into everlasting despair. And these tales of Eriador, too, are part of the one great tale of desperate hope: the tale that began at the Beginning, the tale of Beren and Lúthien, of Turin and Eärendil, of Elendil and Gil-Galad… the tale of Middle-earth, the tale of Arda Marred.

The Hill of Fear

Few tales speak of the blighted place that is the Hill of Fear. It lies far in the north, beyond Carn Dûm, and there the Witch-king of Angmar oversaw terrible rites to worship the darkness — but the Witch-king did not raise it. It is older than him; it was cursed before the fathers of the fathers of Men came to this part of the world. Long long ago, Morgoth put his evil into the living land of Middle-earth, seeking to control all creation, and the Hill of Fear rose like a cancerous growth from the earth. The Elves of old called it Amon Guruthos, "The Mountain of the Shadow of Death," for in its presence even some of the Firstborn felt the fear of mortality.

It is certainly not the only such malicious place in Middle-earth — there are other haunted regions like the vale of the Withywindle, or the haunted wood of Eryn Vorn, or the Dead Marshes on the border of Mordor — but the Hill has a baleful influence over those who dwell nearby. It haunts their dreams and draws them into the ruinous worship of the dark.

Heroes have tried and failed to destroy the darkness beneath Amon Guruthos. Many have entered those dark halls; some fled, broken by the horrors below. Others never returned.

The power of the Hill of Fear waxes and wanes over time, and it can be awoken with rites and sacrifices. The Hill's malign influence faded during the days of the Sea-kings of old, until the Witch-king of Angmar called up its power once more. Soon, the folk of Rhudaur turned their faces from the west and were corrupted by the Shadow.

After the defeat of Angmar, the Hill fell back into its sullen slumber. Monsters still lurked in the caves and tunnels beneath its dark slopes, but it no longer weighed so heavily on the minds of those nearby — though few now dwell in the wild lands beyond the North Downs. Now, stirred by agents of Mordor, the power of the Hill of Fear grows again…

DREAMING OF THE HILL

The malign power of the Hill of Fear reaches far across the land. If any of the heroes gain Shadow points through events connected to the Hill or those it has touched, then they begin to dream of the Hill.

In the dreams, the Hill rises like a great dark wave, looming over the land, rising above the lights of Bree or the Shire or Lond Daer or Lindon, threatening to snuff them out with its shadow. Such dreams haunt the unlucky character, making their nights restless and bitter, until the power of the Hill is broken.

A Heroic Lineage

These adventures give one of the Player-heroes in the Company a possible heroic lineage, an ancestry harkening back to a line of heroes and champions. This character is referred to as *the Heir*, and must be selected by the Loremaster.

The adventure *Messing Around in Boats* gives the chosen Heir a chance to discover their lineage and find an ancestral weapon of great power; in *The Quest of Amon Guruthos*, the character must finish a quest undertaken long ago by their ancestor.

The Loremaster must determine the characteristics of the ancestor and a tale to fit the chosen Player-hero. The best candidate for the Heir is a Man of Bree or a Ranger; a Barding or other adventurer from Wilderland is also possible. An Elf is unlikely; a Dwarf can work, while a Hobbit is a stretch, so to speak.

If the Player-hero is a Ranger, then the ancestor might be a Númenórean or a warrior of the lost kingdom of Arnor. If the Player-hero is a Breelander, then the ancestor might equally be a warrior of Arnor, or a champion of the folk who dwelt in Eriador before the kings came out of the sea.

The ancestor might have lived any time during the late Second Age or up until the year 1974 of the Third Age, at any point during the long struggle against the Shadow.

A Fellowship, Not a Backup Crew

The Loremaster should avoid centring the whole campaign around the Heir. The real tale is how the Company explores the Lone-lands, discovers the creeping influence of the Enemy, and eventually defeats the malign Hill of Fear, depriving Sauron of a weapon he might otherwise turn against the Free People of Middle-earth. While the tale of the Heir does give the Player-heroes insight and a weapon against the Hill, do not elevate the Heir above the other characters. Indeed, the best approach is to pick a character who is ill-suited for the task, and who must rely on their companions for guidance and aid.

Alternatively, one of the Player-heroes could be descended not from the hero, but from a companion of theirs who also perished on the Isle of the Mother — giving them a connection to the Hero of old, but not an unquestionable claim.

If you prefer a more egalitarian (one might say Hobbitish) approach, you can drop the subplot of the Heir completely by adjusting the events of *Messing About In Boats* (see the box on page 26) without affecting the rest of the adventures.

Example Ancestors

The following descriptions of ancestors can be adapted to conform to the characteristics of the Player-hero that has been chosen as the Heir, or as examples of how an ancestor could be built from scratch.

Their presentation conforms to the format outlined on page 221 of *The One Ring* for Landmarks:

- A *Rumour* is the piece of information that the Player-heroes may pick up while adventuring or during the Fellowship Phase. It might contain a mix of true and false information, filtered through local prejudices, superstitions, etc.
- Further information available to Player-heroes who research the ancestor is presented as *Old Lore*, and can be gained while adventuring or during the Fellowship Phase. Generally, Old Lore has more precise and truthful information than what is contained under the Rumour heading.

Tarandis, The Knight of Arnor

RUMOUR

"Oh, once there was a king who lived in a golden palace by a lake, and many knights served him, and the greatest of these knights was Tarandis. Elven-fair she was, maiden of polished steel, and with her companions she went on errantry across the lands, fighting Trolls and Dragons and such things. Then the king of Angmar arose, and all the land fell under shadow. In those days, Tarandis was like a blazing beacon all along the hills; wherever the day was darkest and the foes thickest, she was there. Her star fell in the north, the stories say, but I've heard that she'll come back when she's needed."

OLD LORE

"Tarandis was a knight of Arthedain, in the waning days of the North-kingdom during the wars against Angmar. She was in the service of King Aravel, whose grandson Arvedui was the last ruler of the North-kingdom."

Jack of Bree

RUMOUR

"Once upon a time, there were three evil giants, and they lived in a castle beyond the north wind. Now, being giants, the castle wasn't big enough for all of them, so they made a wager, and the wager was this; whichever giant did the most evil would inherit the castle.

The first giant was as tall as a tree, and he went down to Bree, and stood astride the Road. And whenever anyone came by, he'd reach down and gobble them up. And he attracted many outlaws and thieves to his side, for they also attacked travellers on the road, and they were glad to have a giant with them.

Now, in Bree-land there lived a lad called Jack, and he was the pot-boy at the Pony (don't you know the Pony's older than Bree-hill?), and when he heard of this giant he took up his axe and he went a-hunting. When he met the giant, the giant bent down to eat him, and Jack said, "don't kill me! I'll be one of your outlaws, too. In fact, I've the keenest eyes of anyone you'll ever meet, so if you pick me up and put me on your shoulder, I'll be your lookout and find more people to rob." Excited by the prospect of doing even more mischief, the giant agreed. He picked Jack up and put the boy on his shoulder, right next to his neck — and then out came Jack's axe, right quick, and chop chop chop!"

(The tale goes on to describe how Jack became king of the outlaws, and led them in battle against the armies of the second giant, who'd become a warlord of the mountains and rallied Orcs and Goblins to his side. The third giant, who was *'as tall as a dark hill, and taller than a stormcloud'* claimed the castle beyond the north wind, and sent *'a breath of malice'* down to trouble Bree-land. And so Jack set off to slay this third giant, but never returned.)

OLD LORE

"Stories often have a grain of truth in them. In the dark years, when war and plague beset Eriador, Bree was often left unprotected, and unlikely heroes arose to defend it. The 'three giants' of the tale are symbolic of perils that troubled the north — anarchy, the threat of Orcs, and the natural disasters of plague and bad weather."

Dvalin, Dwarf in Exile

RUMOUR

"Know this: in Khazad-Dûm the honoured dead sleep soundly in their stone houses, in the quiet street of the tombs. But one of those tombs is empty, for the bones of great Dvalin never came home. Now Dvalin was accounted mighty among the Dwarves; Durin's Shield, they named him, for he was ever at the king's right hand. One day, when Khazad-Dûm is ours once more, then his bones will be found and laid in their proper place of honour. Until then, Dvalin sleeps lightly, a sentry in the valley of death."

OLD LORE

"The annals of the kings speak of Dvalin. He was among the counsellors of King Burin I, and he argued for a closer friendship with the kingdoms of Eriador. The king disagreed, saying 'let the Dwarves keep to their own affairs; let us not become enmeshed in the quarrels of Men'. But Dvalin did not relent, arguing that even though the Great Enemy was defeated, the Shadow might rise again in another form, and that it would be wise to forge strong alliances. In time, the king grew wrathful, and exiled Dvalin from the city, and he never returned. It is said that when Arthedain fell, King Burin II wept, and cursed the folly of his father."

The Hill and the Ancestor

The ancestor of the chosen Player-hero once swore to defeat the evil of the Hill of Fear. Alas, the hero's courage was not equal to the task, and they had to flee before they could vanquish the darkness beneath the hill. Seeking to strengthen their will with the inspiration of ancient tales, they travelled to the Isle of the Mother (page 33), where heroes of old lie buried, but they never returned from that place, and their oath was left unfulfilled…

But now, as the Shadow rises in the east and old powers awaken, there must be a reckoning before the world ends.

CHAPTER 1

A TROLL-HOLE, IF EVER THERE WAS ONE

They searched about, and soon found the marks of Trolls' stony boots going away through the trees. They followed the tracks up the hill, until hidden by bushes they came on a big door of stone leading to a cave.

In a hole in the ground there lives a Troll.

Not a nice cosy Hobbit-hole, full of comforts and a well-stocked pantry. No, this is a Troll-hole, awash in noisome things and bones crunching underfoot wherever you step. If there is a pantry in this Troll-hole, it is a prison cell.

And it is not just one Troll. It is a whole family of them. They came down from the Trollshaws, on the edges of the old kingdom of Angmar, and encamped near the Crossroads of Bree. Trolls are not unknown in these parts — Bilbo Baggins met no fewer than three of them on the Road, and another made trouble in the graveyard in Bree a generation ago — but a whole family is a danger to Bree and the lands around.

Now, Bree is defended in secret by the Rangers of the North. Most Bree-folk do not know this, but the Trolls — oh, they know it. The stones of the Ettenmoors are stained black with Troll-blood spilled by Rangers. This family of Stone-trolls may have crept past the Rangers, but they know that they will be attacked if they just stomp into Bree and start chomping. The head of the family is a clever old Troll-matriarch named Nelly Longarms, and she came up with a plan. Instead of the Trolls going to the meat, they would lure the meat to them…

Jari the Wanderer

Many Dwarves travel the Road through Bree, on their way over the Misty Mountains to Erebor and the Iron Hills. Jari's often seen on the Road, too, but never with a destination in mind. He is an exile, banished from the Blue Mountains for an unspeakable crime. He survives by his wits — a little thievery, a little smith-work, a little treasure-hunting. While the Dwarves who know of his crimes shun him, Jari's practised smile and talent with a blacksmith's hammer have won him some casual friends in Bree and other towns along the Road.

Now, a few weeks ago, Jari was poking around some old ruins when he had the misfortune to come face to face with Nelly Longarms. Instead of eating him, the Troll bargained with him — if Jari lured more victims into the clutches of the Trolls, she would spare him. Jari agreed, in exchange for his life and the pick of the belongings of the victims.

THE FIRST VICTIMS

Just as the Trolls came south, the family of Diarmoc came north. They are of a people descended partially from Dunlendings and partially from the subjects of Gondor who dwelt along the banks of the river Isen. Trouble with the Horse-lords of Rohan drove them out, into the unknown lands beyond Tharbad. Diarmoc sold what he could, turning his flocks of livestock into a few silver pennies, and then he and his family — his wife, his sons and daughters, his servants — loaded all they possessed into two caravans and set off in search of a safer place to dwell. As they came up the Greenway, they chanced to meet Jari the Dwarf. Feigning kindness, Jari warned them to avoid Bree (*"it's worse than Tharbad, full of thieves and murderers"*) and told them of a pleasant vale where they would

OTHER ROADS TO ADVENTURE

Instead of the default opening scene, there are other ways to get your Player-heroes involved in the tale of the Troll-hole.

- Any Patron could tell the heroes of rumours of a marauding band of Trolls that mysteriously vanished. Rangers found the signs of the monsters' passage, but they have not been seen outside Bree or the Shire. Where have these Trolls gone?
- Heroes searching the barrows and ruins of the Lost Kingdom might run into Jari and Diarmoc on the road.
- Maybe Diarmoc isn't the first victim of the Trolls, only the most recent. Other friends or kinfolk of the heroes may have vanished, and the heroes were sent to find some trace of their fate.
- If Tom Bombadil is the Company's Patron, then Tom might take pity on Diarmoc and 'arrange' for the characters to cross his path so they can rescue him.

be assured of a warm welcome. He lured Diarmoc's company into the long arms of Nelly and her kinfolk.

The Trolls have eaten most of Diarmoc's servants, but his wife Elda and his children Tecca and Sulain are now prisoners in the Trolls' larder. Diarmoc too they spared, for Jari suggested that two liars would work better than one. Nelly made Diarmoc swear that he would help the treacherous Dwarf lure more victims into the clutches of the Trolls. The longer he keeps the Trolls fed, the longer his children survive…

TO BREE!

Now, Diarmoc and Jari are on their way to Bree, in search of more meat for the Trolls' pot. Jari is full of glee, for he has already taken Diarmoc's silver for himself and looks forward to more treasure. Diarmoc is full of guilt and woe, but what can he do? If he reveals the truth, the Trolls will surely devour their hostages…

PART 1: BY THE SIGN OF THE PRANCING PONY

The fire is warm, the beer frothy, and the worthies of Bree have gathered in the common room of the Pony to sing songs and make merry. This night, there are two (or three) groups of strangers as well as the locals — a pair of Dwarves, a trio of strangers from over the mountains, and (if they are not known in Bree) the Player-heroes.

SITTING BY THE FIRE

Arna, Harald and Leif are young merchants from distant Laketown, who came west in search of new trading opportunities; they bring wine from Dorwinion and clever trinkets from Dale. They are bound for the Blue Mountains, and know little of the geography of the lands west of the High Pass, so they are eager to talk to local travellers who might know more of Eriador. If prompted, they tell a little of recent news from Wilderland. There is a strong King in Dale, Bard the Bowman, but the good years are passing and there are rumours of evil in Mirkwood again.

The Dwarves — Floki and his friend Hornbori — by contrast, do not discuss their business except with other Dwarves, and then only in secret. If convinced (with a roll of **PERSUADE**, for example), they admit they are on their way back from a journey into the lonely lands north of Bree, and that they are glad of the firelight and stout hedge around Bree — they saw eerie things in the wilderness, and though they encountered no perils, they felt there were eyes watching them in the night. (Floki plays only a minor role in this adventure, but is an important character in a later part of the campaign, *Wonder of the Northern World*, page 73. Consider having the Company encounter Floki again a few times between these two adventures, so that the Player-heroes will be willing to entertain his request in *Wonder of the Northern World*. They might run into him during a Fellowship Phase, or meet him again on the Road or in the Blue Mountains.)

MEANWHILE, OUTSIDE...

The gates of Bree close at nightfall. Just as the gatekeeper is locking up, two travellers approach and ask for entrance. They are a mismatched pair — a Dwarf who is all grin and beard, and a dark-haired Man who seems bereft of all humour.

The Dwarf bursts into the Pony first, throwing open the door and loudly demanding a drink. The Man skulks in like a shadow a few minutes later.

> If the Player-heroes later question the gatekeeper, he reveals that Jari and Diarmoc arrived at Bree together, but they entered the inn separately.

ENTER JARI

Shortly after his grand entrance, Jari the Dwarf demands to know if there are *"any brave souls in the inn who'd like to earn their fair share of a great treasure."* He avoids the Dwarves in the corner, and instead focuses on the three travellers from Laketown and the Player-heroes.

WE MET IN AN INN

If this is the first session of your *The One Ring* campaign, then you could have your fellowship meet for the first time here in the Pony.

Jari explains:

- As everyone in Bree knows, he is a noted explorer and treasure-finder. Dwarves have a nose for gold, and he's on the trail of buried treasure. One of his distant uncles, Great-uncle Bori, buried it long ago to hide it from bandits, and Jari is the only one who knows the secret.
- The treasure-cache is hidden in a valley to the north of Bree, said to be the haunt of Wolves and worse things. Jari's not a fighter — he needs some doughty sword-wielding types to guard him while he searches the valley.
- He offers the heroes a share of the treasure as payment if it's found; he has a little money to pay in advance.

The three Men from Lake-town are not adventurers; they were warned not to leave the Road, and so they regretfully turn down Jari's offer, though not without many wistful glances and dreams of an easy fortune. The Dwarves in the corner glare at Jari, but say nothing.

ENTER DIARMOC

While Jari is talking, Diarmoc slouches into the inn, entering quietly and joining the Company like a shadow. The Player-heroes may make an **AWARENESS** roll to notice when he joins the crowd; otherwise, they assume he was always there. Diarmoc's role is to convince any hesitating characters to join Jari's scheme. He might:

- Mutter that this sounds like easy money
- Vouch that he, too, has heard tell of the Dwarf's uncle and his fabled treasure
- If any of the Player-heroes are suspicious-looking or untrustworthy types like a Ranger, then Diarmoc mutters that they could waylay the Dwarf after finding the treasure and steal it all.

Observing Diarmoc carefully (and passing an **INSIGHT** roll) lets the hero guess that Diarmoc is acting strangely; he speaks as if half-strangled, forcing the words out past his lips.

Jari the Wanderer

A knavish Dwarf, Jari lacks the courage and determination of most of his kinfolk, but makes up for it by being loud and ebullient, larger than life. He presents everything as a grand adventure, an opportunity too good to be missed. He is your best friend until he stabs you in the back.

OCCUPATION: Rogue and accessory to murder

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Flamboyant, Cunning

Diarmoc the Traveller

In his distant homeland, Diarmoc was a respected Man of means, master of a great farmstead. Now he has lost almost everything — home, wealth, family — and must strangle what remains of his honour in order to salvage anything from this disaster. He is quiet-spoken and grim, and a poor liar.

OCCUPATION: Unwilling henchman

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Secretive, Outlander

ACCEPTING THE QUEST

Diarmoc and Jari adjust their approach to suit the Player-heroes. If there is a Dwarf in the Company, then Jari might declare how woeful it is that the gold of the Dwarves is lost to them. If there are Hobbits, then he compares them to *"that Hobbit who went east and stole a Dragon's hoard"*. Breelanders might be encouraged to help defend their homeland by slaying whatever monsters live in the valley before they threaten Bree.

If the heroes agree to Jari's plan, he proposes they leave tomorrow morning; *"it's a week's travel"* to the valley where his uncle's treasure is buried. He gives the Player-heroes a handful of silver pennies to buy supplies and other needed things for the journey. He tells them that he will meet them outside Bree — he's got some ponies tied up in the woods outside town.

NOSING AROUND IN BREE

Wise or suspicious Player-heroes may wish to do a little investigating before they depart.

- Jari is well known in Bree; he has passed through several times. Few people have a bad word to say about him, although a successful **RIDDLE** roll discovers that he has failed to pay for his drinks a few times — and while no-one can prove that he robbed anyone, there are whispers of valuables gone missing after Jari passed through town.
- The taciturn Dwarves, if pressed, admit that Jari is known to them; he was exiled from the Blue Mountains for theft and fraud. Floki urges the Player-heroes not to trust the wretch. The Dwarves do not speak further of Jari's crimes to outsiders, but if asked by a Dwarf, they reveal that Jari was accused of tomb-robbing and dealing in relics from lost Moria — a crime in the eyes of the Longbeard Dwarves. Floki admits that associating with Jari tarnished the good name of Floki's own brother Flonar (A tale fully told in *Wonder of the Northern World*), and he warns that Jari brings ill-luck to those who travel with him.
- A close examination of the silver pennies that Jari gave as part payment for the quest notes that the coins are strange — they were minted in far-off Rohan, and bear the image of the King of that land.
- If the door warden of Bree is questioned, he recalls that Jari the Dwarf entered just as the gate was closing, in the company of a strange Man. The pair seemed to be travelling together.

PART 2: THE JOURNEY TO THE TROLL-VALE

Jari the Dwarf waits for the Company a short distance outside Bree, in a sheltered dell north of Bree-hill. The Company finds him crouched over a campfire, merrily frying up a breakfast of bacon, sausage and egg. Nearby, four fine ponies crop the long grass. Jari jumps up and greets the adventurers. *"Friends! Eat, eat. We have a long journey ahead of us before we find my great-uncle's treasure, so let us put a little food in our bellies 'ere we march."*

Of course, the travellers only rarely glimpse such a view — if they are lucky, then soft grey mists cloak the whole land in a damp shroud, and they can see little more than the grassy terrain ahead of them. If they're unlucky, then rain clouds roll in from the north-west and drench them in miserable prolonged downpours that turn all the land into sucking mud.

Jari makes for a valley in the Weather Hills — the hidden vale of Morglynd.

THE JOURNEY NORTH

Jari leads the Company north at first, along the edge of the Chetwood. Once clear of the forest eaves, they turn north-east. Off to the travellers' right, the low hillocks and wild pastures of Bree-country slope down towards the bowl of the Midgewater, and little streams flow eagerly towards the marsh, unaware of the doleful realm that awaits them. Ahead, on the distant horizon, the line of the Weather Hills stands like a dozen watchful sentinels, with mighty Weathertop furthest to the south, set off a little from the rest like a lonely captain.

VISITING WEATHERTOP

On the off-chance that the Company turns aside to visit the landmark of Weathertop (*Ruins of the Lost Realm*, page 90), note that the cache there currently holds a note from Orothel (page 23), asking for aid from her fellow Rangers in the Vale of Morglynd.

JARI'S TALE

As the Company travels north, Jari engages the Player-heroes in conversation, ingratiating himself with them as best he can. He might ask about where the characters come from, why they have gone wandering, or what they will do with the vast treasure they are sure to find in the hidden valley.

Along the way, Jari tells the tale of his great-uncle Bori. Again, the Loremaster should tailor his tale to the personalities of the Player-heroes — if they are the sort to be enchanted by tales of magic, then Jari might claim that his uncle laid magical spells of concealment on the hoard, and that only Bori's rightful heir can open the cave — and it has to be at sunset on Durin's day, and you need the right magic key, and a magic map that can only be read in moonlight. If the heroes are cynical swords for hire, then Jari might emphasise the threat of Goblins and urge the Company to hurry before someone else finds the treasure.

The bones of the tale are always the same: Jari claims that his family has always been unjustly mistreated by the jealous Dwarves of the Blue Mountains, and that his uncle was a traveller and treasure-seeker of renown. Why, he entered into lost Dwarven cities in the Grey Mountains, and who knows what fabulous gems and jewels he found there? Anyway, the Dwarf-lords of the Blue Mountains threatened to take Bori's hard-earned gold with fines and taxes, and rather than yield up his treasure to them, Bori buried it.

If the Player-heroes ask troublesome questions, then Jari says that he has to scout ahead, and leaves the Company for the evening. The Dwarf is remarkably stealthy when he wishes to be; following Jari requires a **HUNTING** roll — *losing (1d)*, as Jari is Cunning. If a Player-hero manages to follow Jari, they see that the Dwarf does not scout ahead; instead, he circles back and spies on the Company as they travel or encamp for the night. Alternatively, if the Company has nearly reached the hidden valley, then Jari sneaks off to tell the Trolls that their next meal is coming by signalling to Nelly Longarms — he climbs a tree and imitates the cry of a curlew.

DIARMOC'S TALE

Well-travelled Player-heroes may (with a successful **TRAVEL** or **LORE** roll) guess from Diarmoc's garb and mode of speech that he comes from the near south beyond Dunland, from the border of Gondor's western marches. Travellers from that region are not unheard-of lately, as rumours of trouble and shadow in the south drive them to safer lands, but they are still unusual.

If questioned, Diarmoc reluctantly gives a version of the truth (leaving out how his family are the prisoners of Nelly Longarms and her Trolls, and how he's bound to serve Jari). He says that he and his kinfolk left the South and travelled north, but were waylaid by Trolls on the way. Only Diarmoc escaped, and he does not know what became of his family. He hopes, one day, to find a way to rescue them — if they have not already been eaten.

- Left unchecked, Diarmoc descends into despairing imaginings about what might have happened to his family, speculating grimly that they've been devoured. A successful **ENHEARTEN** roll rallies his spirits; otherwise, everyone listening to his woes gains 1 point of Shadow (Dread).
- If the Player-heroes suggest that they could help Diarmoc rescue his family, he realises that he's said too much, and hastily says that the quest at hand is to find Bori's buried treasure in the hidden valley, and has nothing to do with Trolls. An **INSIGHT** roll confirms he is lying — and likely leads into Challenging Diarmoc.

ON THE ROAD WITH DIARMOC

If the Player-heroes leave Bree in the company of Diarmoc, sooner or later they may choose to confront him about his relationship with Jari and the Dwarf's true intention.

But discovering the truth about the situation is not so easy — Diarmoc's goal is to safeguard his family. To do this, he must bring victims to the Troll-vale, and he must ensure that Jari has no reason to think that he has strayed from this task. If the Dwarf suspects that Diarmoc is plotting against the Trolls, or that Diarmoc has given warning to the victims, then the children's lives are forfeit.

Diarmoc hates Jari and the Trolls for forcing him to do this, to sacrifice the lives of innocents to save his children — but if he must choose between the Player-heroes' lives and those of his children, there is no question which he will pick. He would like to believe that the heroes can destroy the Trolls and free his children, but he has lost all hope, and with it, all courage.

Therefore, the truth is revealed slowly, peeled like the layers of an onion. The Loremaster may use the information presented in the nearby box to manage the slow unravelling of Diarmoc's conscience.

THE LAST NIGHT

As the travellers approach the Weather Hills, Jari leads the Company to a sheltered spot. The trail winds its way up a steep-sided hillock, one of the westernmost of the hills. At the top are a few tumbled stones that mark the watchtower that once stood here — long ago, there was a beacon fire here, signalling along the line of hills from the Road to Fornost Erain. He points east, and tells the characters that yonder lies the hidden valley of Morglynd.

THE FIRST REVELATION

TRIGGERED BY: Challenging Diarmoc

If confronted, Diarmoc "admits" that he met the Dwarf on the road outside Bree, and that Jari paid him to bolster the Dwarf's attempts to recruit adventurers. Diarmoc claims that Jari fears there may be dangers in the hidden valley, and so he had Diarmoc enter Bree separately as a ruse to ensure that the Dwarf would be able to recruit a goodly number of adventurers.

A successful **INSIGHT** or **RIDDLE** roll reveals that Diarmoc is still hiding something; the Southerner's mood continues to grow ever darker and more troubled as they travel north.

THE SECOND REVELATION

TRIGGERED BY: Either continuing to press Diarmoc after Diarmoc's Tale (page 14) is told, or if the Player-heroes accuse Jari of treachery.

Diarmoc admits that there is more to this quest than was said at Bree. The hidden valley contains little treasure – *"it's home to a band of foul Trolls who capture and eat people."* They waylaid Diarmoc's family and devoured them. He met Jari as he wandered, bereft and lost, and Jari came up with the tale of the lost treasure in order to recruit some stalwart adventurers. Their real goal is slaying the Trolls, not finding Dwarf-gold – although Jari quickly assures the adventurers that the Trolls probably have a fortune worth taking, and there's more to this quest than mere revenge.

A successful **INSIGHT** or **RIDDLE** roll confirms that Diarmoc's being mostly truthful, but he still seems weighted down by guilt, suggesting there is more to the tale.

THE THIRD REVELATION

TRIGGERED BY: A successful **ENHEARTEN** roll when Jari is not listening

Diarmoc finally breaks down and tells the truth – his family is being held hostage by Trolls. If he does not bring them victims to eat – or Jari warns the Trolls that Diarmoc has failed – then the Trolls will kill his children. He does not know how Jari will signal to the Trolls, but if the Trolls do not receive a message from the Dwarf, then all is lost.

The fault is Diarmoc's – he brought his family to this desolate land, he led them into the clutches of the Trolls. His conscience will no longer permit him to continue – he is already lost, but he will not damn others. He urges the Player-heroes to flee south before the Trolls come for them too, and warns them that Jari the Dwarf is in league with the Trolls, and tells the Heroes that they should slip away when Jari is not watching them.

Jari insists that it is a good place to camp, and suggests lighting a fire there, claiming that no-one will be able to see it from below. (*"Trust a Dwarf to know a sheltered spot amid the rocks,"* he says.) In truth, Jari intends to signal to the Trolls that dinner is coming tomorrow. If the Player-heroes protest, Jari sits down in a huff and complains about the cold and damp, and tries to sneak off to signal the Trolls by imitating the cry of a curlew.

The next morning, Jari delays breaking camp as long as possible, so the Player-heroes reach the hidden valley with only a few hours of daylight. The goal is to stall the Company so they are easy prey for the nocturnal Trolls.

WAYLAYING JARI

Player-heroes who become suspicious of Jari may think of confronting or capturing the Dwarf. The danger of this tactic is that Jari has arranged a signal with Nelly Longarms, and if the Trolls do not get this signal when strangers arrive in their hidden valley, then the Trolls will murder Diarmoc's family. So, capturing Jari is tantamount to killing Diarmoc's kinfolk — and Diarmoc knows this, so he will either plead for the heroes to free Jari or attempt to do so himself.

If questioned, Jari initially snarls and threatens the Player-heroes, shouting that he has 'powerful friends' who will bring ruin down on his enemies. He admits that he's in league with the Trolls and that he intended to lure the Player-heroes into a trap — and now that they've escaped his snare, the Trolls will eat Diarmoc's family instead!

Possible ways to resolve this dilemma:

- A successful ENHEARTEN or PERSUADE roll can convince Jari that the Player-heroes can defeat the Trolls, and that he's better off joining the winning side. A converted Jari becomes a snivelling, desperate sycophant, eager to buy forgiveness by telling the Player-heroes all he knows about the hidden valley.
- Following and eavesdropping on Jari on the edge of the hidden valley can let a Player-hero learn his system of signals. If all is well, he makes the cry of a curlew three times, signalling to the Trolls that they should make ready to ambush the travellers. His other signal is to cry like a fox three times.

FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED

If Jari successfully warns the Trolls of the approach of the Company, see *The Trolls In Wait*, page 22.

PART 3: THE HIDDEN VALLEY

Up the hill they went; but there was no proper path to be seen, such as might lead to a house or a farm…

RUMOUR

There are haunted places away up in the Weather Hills, valleys where the shadows lie deep and the sun never reaches. I heard a tale that there's old buried treasure in one such valley. Now, some say it was the Dwarves who buried it, and some say it was the Kings of old, and I don't know who has the right to it. But I'll tell you this — you wouldn't catch me going treasure hunting in those hills. Too easy to fall and break your neck… or have something there break it for you.

OLD LORE

In the last years of the old kingdom of Arthedain, when there was war with the dark land of Angmar, the King's soldiers built many hidden fortresses and watch-towers along the Weather Hills as a bulwark against invasion. Secret paths and stairs, too, they cut into the earth so they could move unseen. They never left themselves without a hidden way out.

BACKGROUND

The valley of Morglynd is one of many in the wrinkled old skin of the Weather Hills. To the north, south and east of the valley rise tall grey hills, stony and barren; to the west are lower hills dotted with small thickets. A stream runs through the valley, quick and cold. It flows around an earthen mound called the Wart of Morglynd, forming a little mountain lake before it finds the path down west. The Wart was raised by Men of Arnor, long ago.

HOW MANY TROLLS?

Assume Nelly has one son for every two Player-heroes (rounding up). So, if you have a Company of five Player-heroes, then there are three Trolls, plus Nelly herself. Use the **Stone-troll Robber** statistics from page 152 of *The One Ring* for Nelly's sons.

Clever heroes will avoid getting ambushed and facing all the Trolls at once!

ON SUNLIGHT

As is well known, Stone-trolls cannot tolerate the light of the sun, for its touch turns them to stone. To avoid this calamity, Trolls take refuge in caves or in the deepest woods where no sunshine penetrates the forest canopy.

Here in the valley, there are no thick woods to provide cover, but the Weather Hills to the east do give the Trolls a few hours of safety in the morning before the rising sun touches the shaded valley. Most of the Trolls shelter in the tunnels of the Wart during the hated day, while Nelly herself prefers to submerge in the cold waters of the little lake. Nelly has the knack of slowing her breath like a crocodile, so she can wait out the daylight under the water.

The Trolls also use what are called Troll-shawls or Troll-hides, large heavy blankets made of cow-hide or woven reeds, weighed down with mud and moss. If a Troll is caught out in the open by the rising sun, it can – if it is fast enough – unfold a Troll-shawl and crawl beneath it, hoping that every inch of its hoary skin is hidden from the daylight and that no enemy finds the shawl and cuts a hole in it.

While Trolls must hide from the touch of the sun, and find daylight painful, they can still see during the day, and can watch intruders in the valley from their hiding places. Anyone moving in the hidden valley may be spotted by the Trolls, and come nightfall, the hunt begins...

TOOK-BELLOWS' TROLL-PARASOLS

No discussion of Troll-shawls is complete, of course, without mentioning ill-fated Hobbit entrepreneur Montgomery Took-Bellows, whose creativity was matched only by his greed. Took-Bellows was a great collector of umbrellas, and had the idea of commissioning a gigantic parasol with the intent of selling it to Trolls. Apparently, the fellow was convinced that Trolls were violent and dangerous only because of their unsociable hours, and that sheltering them from sunlight would be enough to morally redeem them.

Took-Bellows set off for the Trollshaws in Year 1352 of the Shire Reckoning, a bundle of oversized parasols in hand. What became of him is a mystery, although the remains of a parasol were discovered by some confused Dwarves a day's travel east of the Forsaken Inn, who initially mistook it – the parasol, not the inn – for some species of wraith. It is generally assumed that Montgomery was eaten by his prospective customers, who doubtless put a parasol to use as a spit. However, the surviving Took-Bellows have a family tradition that a gust of wind caught an open parasol and carried Montgomery away into the clouds, and that he will return one day with a fortune or at least less of an obsession with umbrellas.

Other than the landmark of the Wart, the rest of the valley is a landscape of moss-hung rocks, shadowy clefts, and piles of scree.

Mortal Men dwelt here in the old days. Middle Men, first, then Men of the West. There was a time when great herds of sheep and cattle grazed here before being brought to market at Bree — or other towns and castles that are now forgotten and lost under the grass. War and plague emptied out the valley and the lands around.

In recent years, Morglynd was home to Tolgarth Heather and his family, a fellow of Archet who so disliked his neighbours that he set off into the wild to build a new farmstead, despite their dire warnings. Tolgarth Heather and his family were the first victims of Nelly Longarms — she crept into the valley by night, and hid from the sun beneath the waters of the little lake. When the Heathers' sheep came down to drink, Nelly Longarms snatched them and drowned them and ate them — and when the Heathers came to investigate, she took them too. Now, the valley is hers… and her sons have eaten every wild goat and sheep within miles, so they must look elsewhere for prey.

LOCATIONS

1. THE SOUTHERN APPROACH

This path runs along the bank of the little stream. It was obviously cleared at some point in the last few years; rocks have been rolled aside and brambles cut to make the going easier. The path was made by Tolgarth Heather's family. A successful **HUNTING** roll determines that the path was restored about fifteen or twenty years ago, but has not been used regularly in the last year. With a Great or Extraordinary Success, the hunter finds a Troll footprint in the mud beside the river. There are no other Troll-tracks — which suggests the Troll deliberately brushed away other signs of its presence. Cunning work, for a Troll.

2. TROLL LOOK-OUT

One of Nelly's sons may be stationed on this ridge if the Trolls expect trouble, equipped with a Troll-shawl to hide from the daylight. If the Trolls are not forewarned, then a successful **SCAN** roll of the ridge discovers evidence of Trolling behaviour here, like gnawed bones and tree-roots used as toothpicks.

3. AMBUSH GULLEY

This narrow gulley near the Wart is the Trolls' preferred place to ambush intruders. The gulley is so narrow that a Troll can scramble over the rocks and block off any line of retreat, while the other Trolls emerge from hiding and seize their victims. The advantageous terrain *gains (1d)* to the Trolls' attacks, in addition to the usual benefits of Ambush if they take the heroes by surprise.

As the goal of the Trolls is to add food to their larder, they attempt to grab intruders instead of killing them. In this encounter, a Troll may choose to inflict no damage with an attack, but instead automatically activate the Seize special damage option. If the Trolls find themselves losing, they withdraw to the Wart (and anyone following them risks running into Nelly Longarms).

If Diarmoc is on the side of the Player-heroes, he warns them of the gulley and its perils.

4. THE HIDDEN TRACK

A partially concealed trail that runs parallel to the south bank of the stream. Bracken, reeds and earthen banks hide an unexpectedly deep-set trench. The soldiers of Arthedain dug this track many centuries ago, and though it has mostly been filled in by river-mud and stones that roll down from the hills, it is still the best way to move through the valley unseen. Characters moving along the hidden track *gain (1d)* to any **STEALTH** rolls to pass undetected.

5. RUINED FARMSTEAD

This structure was home to Tolgarth Heather and his family, until the Trolls came for them. The farmstead was well-built, with sturdy stone walls and thatched roofs, but offered no protection against Nelly Longarms. The Trolls smashed in the doors and tore through the thatch, and devoured all the Heathers.

Except one. A daughter of the Heather family, Scylda Heather escaped the Troll attack that claimed her family (see box).

The cellars and outbuildings of the farmstead offer a place to take shelter, although it's obvious that they offer no protection from the strong arms of Trolls. Some of the stones used to build the farmstead were taken from the ancient ruins atop the Wart.

Scylda Heather

Only eight years old, and Scylda has seen more tragedy than most folk ten times her age. She was out gathering firewood when the long fingers of the shadows of the hills touched the farmstead, and out of the shadows came the Trolls. She hid and watched the monsters capture her family. She hid and waited until they left the farmhouse before returning to the ruins of her home. She knew all the stories about Trolls, and how they could not bear the touch of sunlight, and thought she would be safe if she waited until dawn.

Then came that terrible moment when the night air filled with the smell of roasting meat.

Since then, Scylda's survived by keeping clear of the Trolls, scavenging food from the trampled ruins of her family's winter stocks and living off berries and roots. She debated setting off for Bree – in her mind, a place as wondrous and mythical as Annúminas or drowned Gondolin – but does not know the way, so she stayed in the valley she knows. When Diarmoc and his kin arrived, she thought they might help her, but then to her horror they too were captured by the Trolls, and she dared not try to rescue them.

Scylda knows about the Hidden Boat (12) and the secret way into the Troll-hall.

6. THE WART

In days of old, the followers of the king of Arthedain wrought fortifications of earth and stone in this valley; they dug trenches and tunnels, and piled up the earth from them to make the Wart. A tower once stood atop it; built in the last years of the kingdom, it was crudely made in comparison to other castles raised by the Men of Westernesse. That tower is long gone, but its wells and cellars remain. The Trolls have claimed the largest of these as their hall, and shelter here during the day. Side tunnels look from the flanks of the Wart out over the valley, although the Trolls cover the mouths of these tunnels with curtains of woven reeds and cloth.

The Wart's covered with scraggly grass and furze; if the weather is rainy, the hillside turns into a muddy morass. There is a trail up to the top of the hill that was partially paved long ago, and is still the best way up.

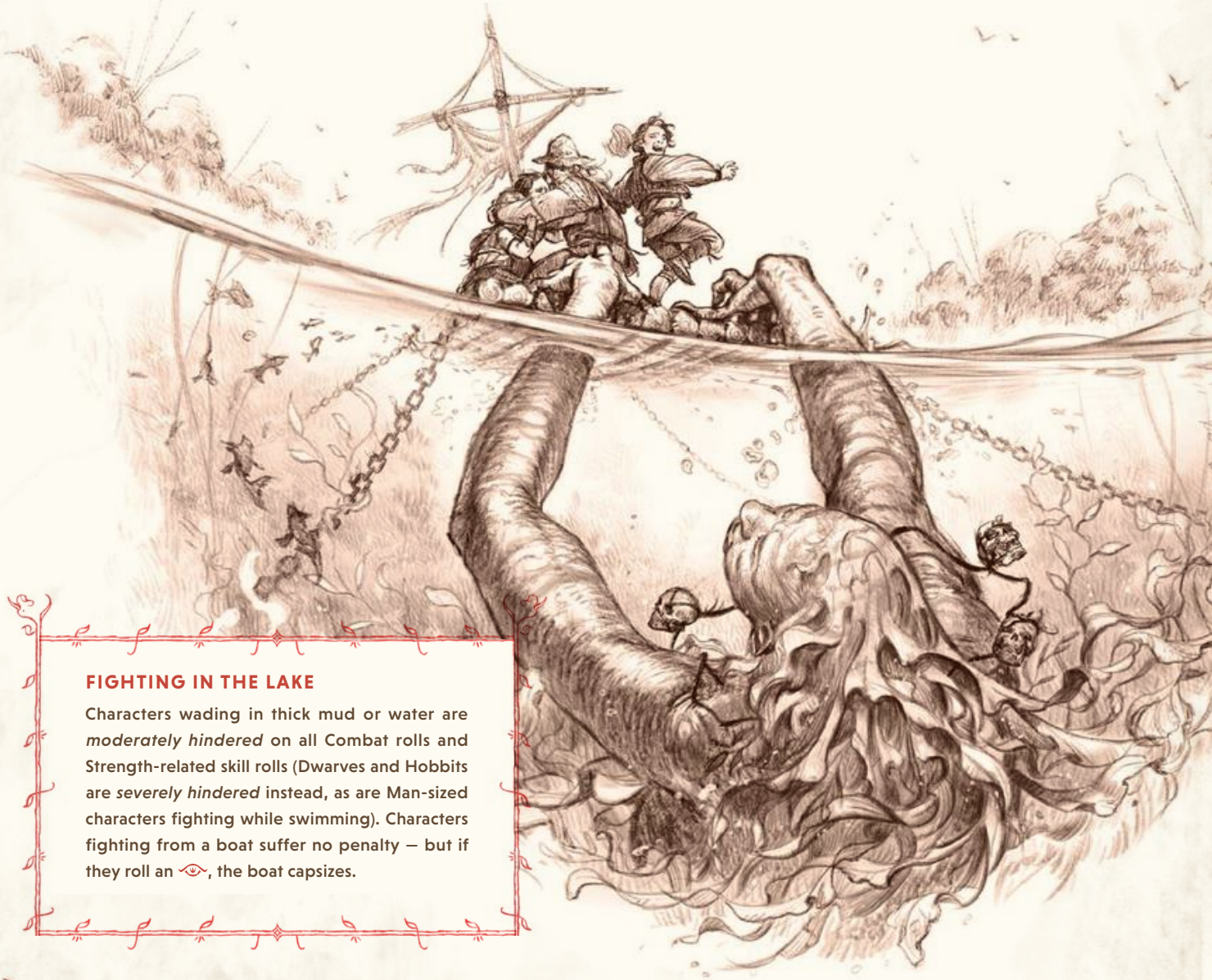
THE HIDDEN VALLEY

7. RUINS

These are the remains of the ancient watchtower that once guarded the valley. Trolls lurk amid the weathered stones by night. Worn bas-reliefs once depicted kings and heroes of the North-kingdom, but are now little more than vague shapes in stone. It takes a keen eye and an active imagination to see that one carving shows King Argeleb II, his left hand offering shelter to a Hobbit while his right hand is outstretched in admonition towards the east. Another pair of carvings, facing west, were once images of King Elendil and his son Isildur.

A staircase leads down to the Troll-hall under the hill. The Trolls keep watch over this staircase during the day if they suspect intruders have come to their valley.

However, the Trolls do not know about the other way down into their Troll-hall. A narrow shaft, once used for bringing supplies up from the cellars, is mostly hidden by fallen stones. However, the children of Tolgarth Heather found this shaft, and Scylda (page 18) still remembers where it is.



FIGHTING IN THE LAKE

Characters wading in thick mud or water are *moderately hindered* on all Combat rolls and Strength-related skill rolls (Dwarves and Hobbits are *severely hindered* instead, as are Man-sized characters fighting while swimming). Characters fighting from a boat suffer no penalty – but if they roll an , the boat capsizes.

8. THE TROLL-HALL

This was once the cellars of the watch-tower; now, it is a foetid and foul Troll-hole — a veritable Troll-hall, even! The sons of Nelly Longarms have taken the cellar as their main stronghold, and it is here they shelter from the hated sun. The ceiling of the hall is low, and bulges alarmingly in several places. The floor is a mess of broken bones and other filth. There is always at least one Troll here; during the day, all the sons may be gathered here, bar any look-outs on the Ridge (2).

BRINGING DOWN THE ROOF: A hero could, with a prodigious effort, collapse the ceiling of the Troll-hall and bury everyone in the chamber beneath many tons of earth and stone. An **ATHLETICS** roll with a Magical success could certainly bring down the ceiling; clever characters might be able to trick or lure the Trolls into smashing their own shelter.

9. THE LARDER

The Trolls keep victims destined to be eaten in this side chamber. The Trolls seal the entrance with a huge rock.

10. MARSH AND LAKE

Mountain streams feed this boggy upland at the foot of the Wart. The outer portion of the area is a sucking marsh similar to the Midgewater, but a traveller can still slog through the mud without too much difficulty. However, the waters quickly deepen, becoming a bitterly cold lake. The reeds and other plants make it hard to tell what is muddy bog and what is water, and one wrong step can submerge a traveller up to their neck.

The fearsome Troll-matriarch Nelly Longarms claims the marsh as her lair.

11. THE PRISONER'S RAFT

Nelly keeps Diarmoc's surviving family as prisoners here on a small wooden platform in the middle of the lake. Diarmoc's wife, his two sons and one of his household servants are still alive, all trapped on the little raft. They could swim to the shore, if they were not all exhausted by exposure and hunger, and if it were not for the Troll lurking in the waters. Twice, they have tried to escape this open-air prison, and twice, Nelly grabbed and ate one of their number, and the rest were caught as they tried to flee the valley. Nelly torments them by whispering about how her sons will soon eat them. Sometimes, she even mimics Diarmoc's voice, claiming that he has abandoned his family, or saying that he is going to become a worse monster than any Troll by willingly luring more victims to the valley.

Nelly Longarms

There are many kinds of Troll, with many strange traits. Some have two heads; some have only one head, and only one eye to boot. Some are hairless, with knobbly hides like the fabled rhinoceros of the far south; others are positively hair-ful, clad in fur so thick none of their other features can be discerned. Some are only a little bigger than a man; others are veritable giants. Some are cunning; some are as stupid as the rocks they become if the sun touches them. About the only thing that unites Trolls is their toothy hunger.

Nelly is no exception in that respect, even though she is an unusual Troll in many other ways. Green her hide is, and green her teeth. She has the knack of holding her breath for hours at a time, and hides from the sun by submerging herself in the marsh and slumbering there like a crocodile. She's an excellent swimmer, and likes to grab foes and drag them into the water. (Also, she cannot stand the prattling of her sons, and so leaves the Troll-hall to them in favour of the quiet solitude of the marsh).

She has a talent for mimicry, and can make her usually croaky voice sound like, say, the cry of a bird, or a call for help, or the voice of a companion. Nelly also knows a few magic spells, learned in the hills of Angmar in her distant youth, although she only uses these spells in dire need.

NELLY LONGARMS
Cruel, Cunning

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 9

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
70	2	9	–	3

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Crush 3 (6/12, Seize)

FELL ABILITIES: *Sudden Strike*. Nelly's attack rolls in the first round of any combat are *Favoured*.

Horrible Strength. If Nelly scores a Piercing Blow, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

Mother Knows Best. Spend 1 Hate to make a nearby Troll's attack *Favoured*.

Dreadful Spells. Spend 1 Hate to cause a thick mist to rise from her lake, shielding her and other Trolls from the sun and making all attacks made inside the mist *Ill-favoured* for one combat round.

12. HIDDEN BOAT

Hidden amid the reeds here is a little boat of hide, stretched over a frame of woven branches, made by Scylda Heather's older brothers before they were eaten. It's simple but serviceable, and can be used to paddle out to the raft to rescue the prisoners. The boat can carry up to four people safely.

13. PERILOUS CLIMB

For those who wish to avoid the treacherous waters of the lake, a steep climb down this cliff is a drier alternative. Descending the cliff requires an **ATHLETICS** roll; failure means the climber either falls or gets stuck in place — and Nelly has such very long arms to snatch victims from their perches on her doorstep…

14. NELLY'S TREASURE

Concealed in Nelly's den in the shallows of the lake is a cache of treasure. Some of these coins she brought down from the Trollshaws, and others her sons found in the Wart. The rest she stole along the way from the Heathers or from Diarmoc's kinfolk or from other victims. This is a Lesser Hoard.

Schemes and Trouble

THE TROLLS IN WAIT

If the Trolls have advance warning of victims approaching the valley, then they conceal themselves along the narrow Ambush Gulley (3). Ideally, Jari stalls the Company until twilight so the Trolls can move freely, but if it is daylight, then the Trolls can use Troll-shawls and the shadows of the gully to avoid direct sunlight.

In the ambush, the Trolls attack from either end of the gully, blocking escape. This means no Player-heroes can flee the fight as long as at least two trolls remain. The Trolls start grabbing victims and stuffing them into sacks. To capture a victim, a Troll must first make a successful Seize attack. On its next turn, if the victim is still held, the Troll may spend its action stuffing the victim into a sack. Once stuffed into a sack, the victim can no longer free itself. On the turn after that, if the Troll is not engaged with any other foes, it will flee the battle with its prisoner. Player-heroes who have not been seized may delay the capture of their allies by staying engaged with the trolls, but this may prove to be a very difficult battle against multiple Trolls — make sure the players realise this.

Each Troll will only seize one Player-hero. Their goal is to capture the tastiest victims, not to immediately kill the intruders. If the Trolls are losing, they try to flee back to the stronghold of the Wart (6).

PRISONERS OF THE TROLLS

Captured victims face one of three possible fates — hostage, lure, or lunch. If the Trolls think that a particular traveller would make a good replacement for Diarmoc, then that traveller is forced to lure more victims to the valley. Another victim (likely the lure's fellowship focus) is kept as a hostage, just like Diarmoc's family. Victims designated as food are destined for the cooking pot, although Nelly's sons always offer their fearsome mother the final say on how the meal should be prepared.

Characters captured by the Trolls are stripped of their weapons and stuffed in the larder (9) to await Nelly's delectation.

BROAD DAYLIGHT WITH A BRIGHT SUN

Stone-trolls turn to stone if touched by sunlight. If there's a question as to whether a Troll blunders into sunlight during the day, roll the Feat die; on a 6 or less (2 or less around noon), the Troll manages to avoid a sunbeam. Roll every time the Troll risks sunlight.

AID UNLOOKED-FOR

Optionally, if the heroes are in difficulty, bring in Orothel — a Ranger of the North who's been tracking the Trolls for some weeks, and is now considering the best way to deal with such a dangerous group of enemies. She is encamped high in the hills on the eastern side of the hidden valley, watching the Trolls move about at dusk. She knows that most of the Trolls make their lair in the Wart, but has a bad feeling about the waters of the lake.

Orothel has left a message in the Ranger-cache at Weathertop, calling for aid, and is now waiting for reinforcements from her fellows. However, if she sees good folk in trouble, she may intervene.

Orothel

'For I was talking aloud to myself. A habit of the old: they choose the wisest person present to speak to; the long explanations needed by the young are wearying.'

Orothel looks like a Woman in her sixties, gaunt and careworn, with a lined face like old leather, and thinning grey hair she hides beneath a dark hood. She is older than she looks, and of late she feels old in her bones. Still, there is too much to be done for her to retire to the relative safety of the Ranger-haven – she can smell a change in the east-wind, and these younger Rangers are too soft and green to be trusted with the duty of watching over the old kingdom. Orothel is an adept hunter and tracker, relentlessly practical and determined. She has a sharp tongue and little patience for fools of any sort.

She dresses in the simple, travel-worn garb of the Rangers, without any distinguishing marks or sigils save one – she carries an especially fine dagger with a hilt in the form of a coiling dragon with rubies for eyes. This blade is a heirloom of her family, and it is called Dragon-tooth. She intends to pass it on to her daughter when the time is right.

OCCUPATION: Ranger

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Stern, Wise

Part 4: Homeward Bound

Having survived the ordeal of the Hidden Valley, the Player-heroes may travel back to the welcoming lights of Bree. Key questions to be answered:

- What becomes of Diarmoc and his kinfolk? If the Trolls are all defeated, they might settle in the Hidden Valley, taking over the homestead of Tolgarth Heather. In time, the valley might become a sanctuary for the Player-heroes to rest. Alternatively, if the Trolls are still a threat, then the survivors might flee south under the protection of the Company.
- What becomes of young Scylda Heather? Does she stay with Diarmoc, or do the Player-heroes bring her to her distant kinfolk in Bree? Might one of the heroes adopt the resilient child?
- What of Jari? Do the characters bring the Dwarf to justice in Bree, or deal with him themselves? Might the Dwarf redeem himself a little by fighting against the Trolls? Or does he escape to become an outlaw in the wild, perhaps blaming the Player-heroes for his disgrace?

CHAPTER 2

MESSING ABOUT IN BOATS

Indeed, few Hobbits had ever seen or sailed upon the Sea, and fewer still had ever returned to report it.

This is the Third Age of Middle-earth.

Long ago, before all the world was changed, there were other lands. Their names have passed into legend — Beleriand and Doriath, Gondolin and Nargothrond, the dread fortress of Thangorodrim. There great deeds were done, great battles fought, and terrible losses endured. There the Elves fought Morgoth for possession of the enchanted Silmarils, there walked Beren and Lúthien, Tuor and Turin, all the heroes of old. All those lands were drowned in the breaking of the world at the end of the First Age. All drowned, and so much was lost.

But not all.

In this adventure, an astrologer's divination leads to the Player-heroes taking a ship from Lond Daer and sailing to the Western Isles, one of the last outcrops of the drowned Beleriand. There, they face the shades of the dead and other perils out of the distant past. They also face the question: what is the price of heroism? What does it mean to be the ones who stand against the Shadow?

A Partial Tale of Years

IN THE FIRST AGE...

- A great hero of Men perishes here, and a mound is raised over his grave, and a stone placed there. It is prophesied that this grave shall never be defiled or disturbed, not even if all the world changes.
- The voyage of Eärendil and the ensuing conflict brings the First Age to an end. The powers come out of the West and cast down Morgoth, and the world is remade. The mound is surrounded by rising seas and becomes an island.

OTHER ROADS TO ADVENTURE

Instead of having Falmir Fairbairns drop the adventure in the Company's lap, some other introductions:

- A scholar might find references to a mysterious island in the Western Seas that the heroes of the old Kingdom visited — and there are those in the House of Elrond who bore witness to the deeds of ancient heroes.
- Círdan the Shipwright might tell the Player-heroes of strange things seen by Elven mariners, and send them on one of his ships to the Isle of the Mother.
- A character who looks into a *palantír* might glimpse the shore of the Isle of the Mother.

REMOVING THE ANCIENT HERO

If the Loremaster prefers to do without the Ancient Hero subplot, then make the following changes:

- Aglaen's vision on the shore was of a tall warrior of ancient Arnor, not any of the Player-heroes. There is no obvious connection to any of the Company.
- Instead of having the investigation of the mysterious vision be the main driver of the voyage north, have Eagre talk of his missing daughter; he asks the heroes to sail with him. Alternatively, give the characters another reason to take ship — maybe they are sent to explore the coasts north of Lindon by Queen Nimue, or looking to trade with the Lossoth of the far north. They might be searching for rumours of spies from the south (see *Ruins of the Lost Realm*) or even searching for poor Falmir Fairbairns after he was lost at sea...
- The Ghost does not single out any of the Company or speak of their ancestors (page 6).

IN THE SECOND AGE...

- Ancestors of the Lossoth-folk of the north visit the Isle, and hunt the fabled Fastitocalon.
- Mariners from Númenór find the Isle and rediscover the mound of the hero. It becomes a place of pilgrimage. A fortress is built on the shore.

IN THE THIRD AGE...

- The ancestor of one of the Player-heroes, a great Hero, comes to the island in their youth and is inspired to battle the Enemy.
- The Hero swears to defeat the evil that lurks under the Hill of Fear.
- Seeking to bolster their courage, the Hero returns to the Isle many years later, and forges a sword in the ruins of the Númenórean fortress.
- The Hero returns to Eriador and again attempts to defeat the Hill of Fear. Again, they fail.
- The Hero flees across the sea and returns to the Isle, pursued by evil spirits from the hill.

RECENTLY...

- Eagre, a mariner of Lond Daer, is blown off course by a storm and visits the Isle. Sailing home, he retells the story of his adventure many times.
- Years later, his daughter Elwing sets out to retrace her father's course.
- Elwing does not find the Isle at first, but reaches the Ice-bay of Forochel. There, she befriends the Lossoth and from their ancient tales learns more of the Isle. She and a Lossoth hunter, Jagat, mount an expedition to the Isle.
- The shade of the Hero draws Elwing to discover the Hero's sword. Finding the sword draws the attention of the evil spirits, who assail the island with storms, trapping the travellers. Elwing is wounded and forced to take shelter in a cave…

PART 1: THE SEER AND THE SAILORS

This adventure begins in the town of Lond Daer, at the mouth of the Greyflood. The town is described in the *Ruins of the Lost Realm* supplement; for those without that supplement, know that Lord Daer is a small fishing village at the mouth of the Greyflood, built atop the ruins of an ancient town that was already old when the kingdoms of the North were young. Today, Lond Daer is ruled by Nimue, a brave young woman who delivered the town from a sea serpent and was acclaimed queen of this little kingdom for her effort. Lond Daer is also known for the old towers that rise above the town, towers built by seers and astrologers in days of old in imitation of the Elf-tower of Elostirion, where they could look back West in hopes of glimpsing the vanished glory of Numenor.

If your player-heroes wander near Lond Daer of their own accord, excellent; alternatively, after the events of *A Troll-hole*, the heroes might be asked to escort Diarmoc and his family or Scylda Heather to Lond Daer; Scylda might have relatives there, or Diarmoc may have heard tales of the welcoming down on the road. Another option is to have their Patron point them towards the town, for Queen Nimue seeks heroes and champions for her fragile little realm.

Among those champions is Falmir Fairbairns. He's a young Hobbit who was swept away by enthusiasm and a rushing river, and has ended up as one of the knights of Lond Daer. He's brave and reckless, but has seen enough of the wide world to toughen him up a little — he's no longer a sheltered, innocent Shire-hobbit, but an aspiring adventurer. He also knows Gandalf, so if the heroes have the Grey Wizard as a Patron, Gandalf might introduce them to this valiant Hobbit.

Falmir is certainly an unusual sight, being a Hobbit wearing a bright blue cloak and a knightly tabard, and armed with a dwarf-forged knife.

For his part, Falmir stares curiously at one of the Heroes in particular — whichever Hero you've designated as being Heir to a heroic lineage (page 6). When there's a gap in the conversation, Falmir approaches the designated hero.

"Begging your pardon, but can I ask your name?" When the hero answers, Falmir squeaks in amazement, then grabs them by the hand and drags them towards the Queen's Hall. Falmir explains that there is an astrologer in Lond Daer by the name of Aglaen, a stargazer who claims to be able to tell the future by staring at the stars in the western sky. There are many tales of such mystics, and Aglaen's a funny old fellow — but a few weeks ago he came into the Queen's Hall raving about how he'd seen… well, the Heir. Now, these astrologers do spend most of their time staring into bowls of steaming mercury or peering at the heavens, and they're doubtless cracked as a Baggins, but it strikes Falmir as a singular marvel that Aglaen was able to foresee the Player-hero's arrival. Why, they must meet Aglaen!

As Falmir drags the hero, he mutters that Aglaen saw dark visions too.

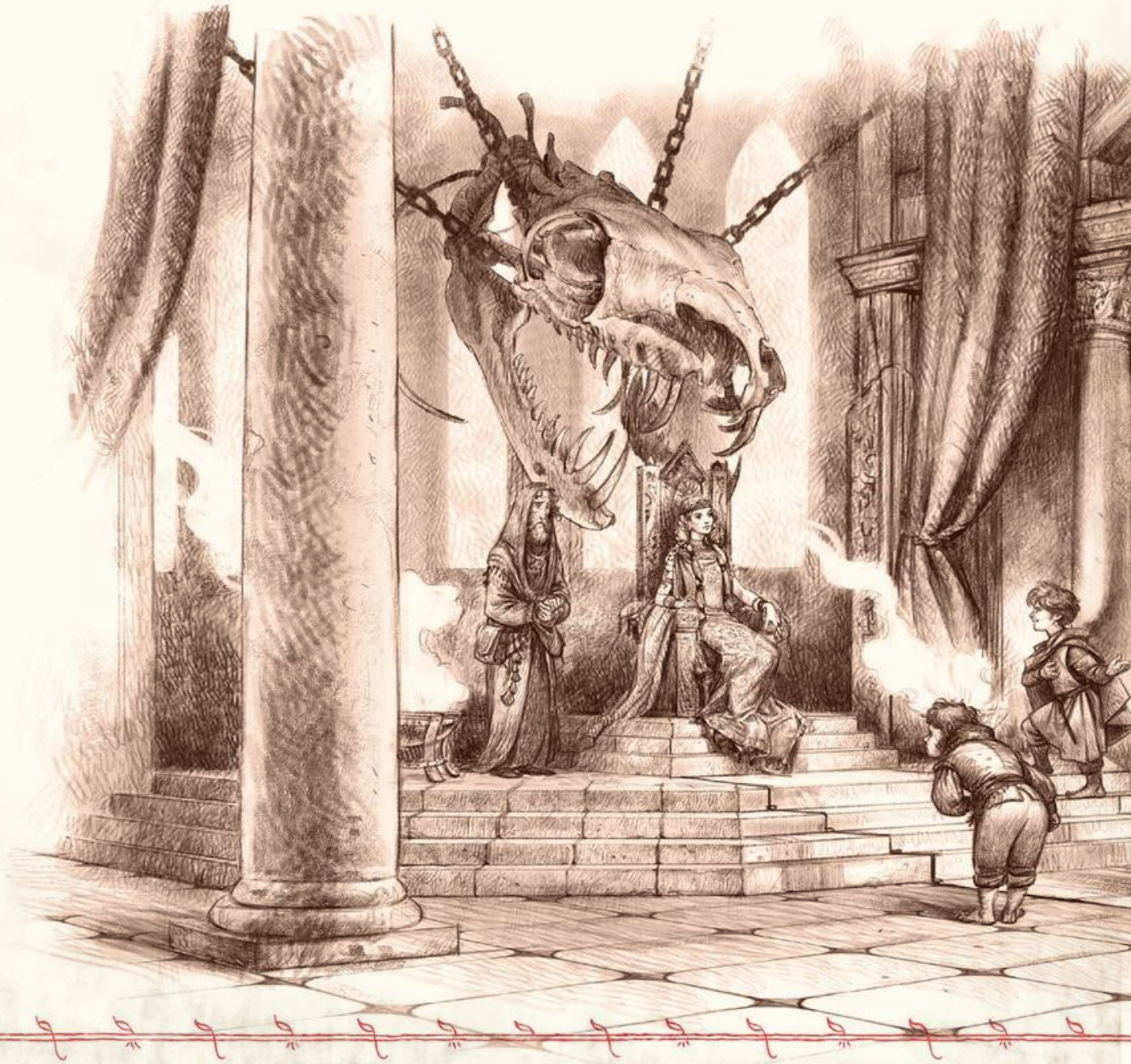
STARTING IN THE HAVENS

Alternatively, if Cirdan the Shipwright is the Patron of the characters, then you could begin this adventure in his halls. Eagre the Sailor is one of the few mortals who visits the Havens; he might encounter the heroes there, and recognise the Heir from Aglaen's prophecy. The characters could either sail south to Lond Daer to consult with Aglaen – or just skip the whole visit to Lond Daer and take up the quest from Part 2.

The Queen's Hall

The hall at the heart of the town is small and smoky, but it's a welcome shelter from the cold sea-wind. On entering the hall, there's an audible collective gasp and a chorus of muttering from the assembled worthies. The astrologer Aglaen is not present, but one of the village children happily runs to fetch him — it is clear that Falmir is not the only one who heard Aglaen's prophecy, and that everyone in the village wants to know how this story will turn out.

Queen Nimue welcomes the heroes if they are of good character, or if Falmir or Gandalf vouches for them. Gandalf is an infrequent visitor to Lond Daer, and Queen Nimue's counsellor and honorary court wizard. The Company should make a suitable Introduction, but this is not a formal Council unless



the Player-heroes have a request for the young queen. Nimue may become a Patron for the Company if they return to Lond Daer later. She has heard of Aglaen's vision of the Heir — and Aglaen has also spoken of darker portents. She hopes that one vision coming true does not imply that Aglaen's other foretellings will also come to pass.

Meeting Aglaen

Aglaen the Seer is a nervous, grey-haired fellow, thin and always shivering in the chilly sea-wind. He stammers when he speaks, which makes his pronouncements and prognostications worryingly unclear. He came to the business of prophecy and foresight late in life, having heard tales of the ancient seers of Lond Daer.

Aglaen's jaw drops when he sees the Heir. He walks over and probes the Heir's face with a bony finger, and examines whatever weapon they bear. *"I saw you…"* he says, *"I saw you on the shore."*

At the Queen's prompting, he tells the tale. The hall falls silent, the assembled worthies enthralled by the story unfolding before them.

Aglaen explains that after a long night staring at the stars, he went for a walk, listening to the sighing of the sea on the shore of Middle-earth. There, he thought he heard a voice whispering to him, whispering the name of the Heir, and a vision entered his mind. He saw the Heir standing in the surf on the shore of a lonely island, a great sword in hand. The sword seemed odd to his sight — the blade was blackened, as if covered in mud or soot, or marred by some impurity in the metal. There was a ruined fortress behind him, an ancient structure like the towers of the stargazers. Then shadows blew in like a storm, and the vision was lost.

As Aglaen speaks, there's a snort and a laugh from the back of the hall, coming from a bearded sailor.

Since then, he has had three other visions — or rather, the same dream three times. In this darker vision, he sees a great dark hill looming over him, rising like a wave about to crash down on him. Howling spirits whirl around this hill, things of such terror that each time Aglaen saw them he awoke screaming.

Aglaen has no idea what these visions mean, or why they came to him. He knows — or at least believes –that a foresight was on him, but what it portends for the Heir, he cannot say.

The bearded sailor interrupts at this point, if the characters have not already spoken to him.

The Laughing Sailor

He introduces himself as Eagre. He explains that he recognised the island from Aglaen's vision when the seer told the tale to the assembled company — a small, steep-sided isle all alone in the Western Sea. Old charts name it the Isle of the Mother. It's as far from Lond Daer as any man has sailed, but Eagre has seen it before. When he was a young boy, sailing with his father, they were caught in a storm and blown far out to sea. They found their way back to the shore of Middle-earth by following along the coast of the western isles and hence to the lands of Forlindon beyond the Gulf of Lhun — but Eagre remembers that island. And he will sail there again with the Player-heroes, if they desire.

While Eagre laughs and makes light of the voyage and the quest for the Isle, observant characters may (with a successful Insight test) perceive a gloom that hangs over him; his boisterous attitude is an attempt to ward off sorrow. Asking about Eagre in Lond Daer, or speaking to him during the voyage, allows the characters to learn Eagre's tale.

EAGRE'S TALE

As he mentioned when first introduced, when Eagre was a boy, he and his father were blown out to sea by a storm, and he visited the Isle of the Mother on the long journey home. No-one else from Lond Daer has ever made such a long voyage, and for all his life Eagre boasted of his masterful seamanship. He proclaimed himself the greatest of mariners.

Now, Eagre had a daughter named Elwing, and he taught her to sail. She listened to his boasts, and aspired to be an even greater sailor than her father. Two years ago, Elwing set off on a voyage of her own — and never returned.

Eagre insists that she will sail back to Lond Daer one day, but he blames himself for filling her head with wild tales of the sea — and he knows that his own claim to fame is founded on an accident. He would never have dared sail as far as he did, if not for that fateful storm.

The Queen's Command

Queen Nimue says that she guesses it is no co-incidence that Eagre happened to be there in the hall when Aglaen's tale was retold - sometimes, the powers of the world do their work so subtly and secretly that it takes one of the Wise to discern random mischance from intentional design. She asks the heroes to take Aglaen's visions seriously, and to visit the Isle and see what they might find there. She shall hire Eagre and his fishing ship to take them there, and outfit them with such arms and provisions that her realm can provide.

Part 2: Voyage into the Sunset

Eagre's fishing ship is named the *Seawing*, and she is as fine a ship as one might find in Lond Daer. Eagre has visited the Grey Havens at times, and learned a little from watching Círdan the Shipwright at work. Swift of sail and fleet upon the wave is the *Seawing*, and she is well provisioned for a long voyage. The sailors of vanished Númenor could navigate by the stars far from the sight of land, but Eagre is not so skilled — he proposes to sail north along the coast, recreating his return journey from the lost isle in reverse "*To go back again having been there, so to speak!*". Therefore, the heroes have a long voyage ahead of them. Eagre can handle the sailing of the ship by himself, although there is always plenty to do on deck for ready hands.

Optionally, if you have only a small number of heroes, then other travellers like Falmir Fairbairns might go on the adventure.

The first part of the journey is largely uneventful. The weather is fair and the winds steady as the *Seawing* swallows up the miles. They pass the haunted cape of Eryn Vorn, where branches that fell from the cliffs above float in the water, bumping alarmingly against the hull, and Eagre warns the heroes that the woods there are perilous. Soon, though, the haunted forest is left far behind, and the *Seawing* comes to the long and mostly empty coast of Harlindon.

Merry Mariners

Describe the wild beauty of the sea, and the novelty of life on board a ship. Ask each Player-hero to describe how their character passes the time aboard the *Seawing*. Eagre's ship has no crew other than the mariner himself and the Player-heroes, so they must deal with any troubles encountered on the voyage.

The travellers encounter Voyage Events as follows.

- **FROM LOND DAER TO HARLINDON:** 1–2 events, each a *Favoured* Feat die roll on the Voyage Events table.
- **FROM FORLINDON TO THE NORTHERN SEAS:** 1–2 events, each an unmodified Feat die roll on the Voyage Events table.
- **FROM THE NORTHERN SEAS TO THE ISLE OF THE MOTHER:** 1–2 events, each an *Ill-favoured* Feat die roll on the Voyage Events table.

OPTIONAL ENCOUNTER: FORESHADOWING KATHUPHAZGÂN

If you intend to use the Black Númenórean spies plot element from *Ruins of the Lost Realm* (page 33), then you could foreshadow the presence of the mighty sea-fortress *Kathuphazgân* by having one of the Player-heroes glimpse the massive vessel looming out of the fog one night. *Kathuphazgân* vanishes into the mists before anyone is sure of what they have seen.

VOYAGE EVENTS TABLE

FEAT DIE	EVENT	CONSEQUENCES	FATIGUE POINTS GAINED
	Terrible Accident	If the roll fails, the target is Wounded.	3
1	Attacked	If the roll fails, everyone in the Company must make a Protection roll (TN 12) to avoid being Wounded.	2
2–3	Bad Weather	If the roll fails, everyone in the Company gains 1 Fatigue.	2
4–7	Becalmed	If the roll fails, the target gains 1 Shadow Point (Dread).	1
8–9	Fair Weather	If the roll succeeds, no Fatigue is gained.	1
10	Favourable Circumstances	If the roll succeeds, no Fatigue is gained and the next Feat die roll on this table is *Favoured*.	1
	Joyful Sight	If the roll succeeds, everyone in the Company regains 1 Hope.	–

Voyage Events are resolved just like Journey Events.

TERRIBLE ACCIDENT: A traveller is knocked overboard or falls from the mast; a fire breaks out aboard ship; the *Seawing* risks running aground.

ATTACKED: By a sea monster (perhaps even dread Fastitocalon!), foes on the shore like the Wild Men of Eryn Vorn, pirates on the southern coast.

BAD WEATHER: A storm, foul winds, a maelstrom, grinding ice in the Northern Sea.

BECALMED: No wind, so the Company must keep each other's spirits up in the face of an unchanging horizon; spoiled or scanty provisions make for hungry bellies; bad dreams fray nerves.

FAIR WEATHER: Warm winds, good fishing, calm seas.

FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCES: A fine tail-wind, a glimpse of a distant land, a dream of the open sea.

JOYFUL SIGHT: Another ship; a glorious sunset or sunrise; Elven-ships sailing West forever.

Dreams

As the *Seawing* travels along Harlindon, each of the Player-heroes (except Elves) start to experience oddly similar dreams. In these dreams, the hero meets with someone from their past — a close family member like a parent, an old friend, a mentor — who asks the hero why they have wandered so far from home, and where they think they are going. Not why are they on the *Seawing*, going to some lost island, but why have they forsaken the comfort and safety of home in favour of the perilous Road that has taken them so far away? Did something drive them away? Were words left unsaid, or cruel words spoken? Are they following some foolish quest? In short, why has the hero gone adventuring?

As each dream fades, the figure changes, taking on the appearance of an old, old Woman, haggard and careworn, sitting hunched in the shadow of a great stone. She reaches out withered hands and asks *"Tell me, what will become of you? Where does thy road end, except in death and sorrow?"* Those who experience the dream gain 1 point of Shadow (Dread).

This vision is the result of forces stirred up by the lingering ghost of the Heir's heroic ancestor, who will be encountered in *Part 3: The Haunted Isle.*

The Gulf of Lune

The *Seawing* crosses into the Gulf of Lune. If there are any Elves or Elf-friends in the Company, they may wish to land at the Havens and take rest and resupply there, although Eagre urges the Company not to linger, but hurry onwards before the weather turns.

Otherwise, their only contact with the Elves is a brief glimpse of grey sails on the western horizon, and it seems to them that the sails do not vanish, but continue on into the sky like soaring gulls as the Elves take the old straight road into the West.

The Northern Seas

The coastline of Forlindon is a landscape of steep, foreboding cliffs and crashing waves. When the wind blows from the west, it threatens to drive the *Seawing* into the many hidden rocks and shoals, and Captain Eagre must fight the tiller and call every hand on board to the lines and sails. But the west wind is still better than the north wind, which carries with it the bite of ice.

The odd dreams fade, but wild waves prevent most of the Player-heroes to sleep comfortably.

EAGRE'S TALE

During this phase of the Journey, the characters notice Eagre scanning the coastline intently, as if searching for signs of a shipwreck. He is looking for some trace of his daughter Elwing. If he has come to trust the Player-heroes, he relates Eagre's Tale (page 30) at this point.

Himling and the Western Isles

In time, the island of Himling rises above the horizon, a great hump-backed mound, wide-shouldered and with a flattened top. Snow lies heavily on the treeless isle, and there is little worth hunting there. On the shoreline, keen-eyed heroes spot a few huts of seal-skin stretched over timber frames. This was an encampment of the Lossoth, the Snowmen of Forochel to the north, but there is no-one here now, and the camp has not been used in years.

Eagre presses on. The next in the chain is a dark isle, thickly wooded in parts, with steep hills and shadowed vales. It has an evil look to it, and from afar the heroes see winged shapes circling the hills like tremendous bats. When the *Seawing* reaches the western cape, Eagre is relieved — they are nearly at the Isle of the Mother, and he knows the course from here.

VAMPIRE BATS
Fierce, Quick

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 2

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
8	1	2	–	1

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Fangs 3 (2/14, Bitten – works like Seize, but the victim also loses 2 Endurance at the end of each combat round in which they are Seized)

FELL ABILITIES: *Fear of Fire*. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is engaged in close combat with an adversary wielding a torch or other sort of burning item.

Ghastly Wings. The creature can attack any Player-hero, in any combat stance, including Rearward.

Snake-like Speed. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

The Unnatural Storm

However, as the *Seawing* approaches the Isle of the Mother, a sudden squall blows out of the north-east, a chill wind out of Angmar. There are fell voices on the wind, and the characters glimpse shadowy shapes riding the air — evil spirits, disembodied and terrible. The Witch-king called these spirits out of the Void long ago, and sent them to harry and torment the Hero. Now they have been stirred up again by the discovery of the Hero's sword, and are bound to stop it leaving the Isle and prevent it from being used against the Shadow.

These spirits reserve their full strength and malice for ships trying to leave the Isle, as the characters will soon discover, but they still torment approaching vessels, lashing them with icy winds and clawing at the crew with spectral hands, driving them into panic and despair. Eagre freezes in terror when the spirits attack; the Player-heroes must make a **VALOUR** test to resist the evil of the spirits. If any of them pass the test, they can grab the tiller and steer the *Seawing* through the storm; if everyone fails, then the *Seawing* crashes on the rocks and runs aground without a hand to guide her. Regardless of the fate of the *Seawing*, the horror of the spirits forces all Player-heroes to gain 2 points of Shadow (Sorcery).

Part 3: The Haunted Isle

The Númenóreans had now become great mariners, exploring all the seas eastward.

RUMOUR

There's a little island in the western seas, scarcely more than a spike of rock rising above the cold waters. They say some great hero of old was buried there, but who knows for sure? The stories may endure, but the details are washed away by the passing years, and only the Elves remember.

OLD LORE

Of the great stories that come down to us from the Elder Days, the saddest is the tale of Turin, who struggled against the dreadful doom that stalked him, and slew the first of the Dragons after the fall of Gondolin. Now Turin was laid to rest on a hilltop, and his mother wept over him, and it was prophesied that his grave would remain undespoiled until the world's ending, when some say Turin will return to battle the Enemy at the Last Battle.

In time, the world changed, and all Beleriand drowned beneath the waves — save Turin's grave, and a few other places in the east. In time, the sailors of Númenor discovered the grave, and raised there a tower to guard the Isle, for Turin was a kinsman of the ancestors of the line of kings. The isle became a place of pilgrimage for the knights and heroes of Númenor, a place of oath-swearing and the making of fellowships and covenants.

And yet, the world changed again. Númenor sank, and the Isle was lost once more. But Turin still slumbers there beneath the earth until the world's ending.

Background

The Isle of the Mother is the smallest and westernmost of the Western Isles, the last land east of the Blessed Realm now that Númenor is gone. Here of old perished ill-fated Turin. Since then, the Isle has become a place of honour and an inspiration to heroes. Many have come here seeking the courage of Turin, who stood against the father of Dragons and defied the curse of the Great Enemy Morgoth (but each of them prayed that they would not share Turin's dreadful fate, for he brought ruin on all those he loved, and bought victory at such a high price he slew himself at the last). The Númenóreans visited here in the days of their power, but for much of the Third Age the Isle was left empty.

Heroes and adventurers still came here, from time to time, for the legend of Turin the Dragon-slayer shall be told until the world's ending. Among those who made that pilgrimage was the ancestor of the Heir, a hero who fought against the enemy in days of old, and here the ancestor swore an oath to destroy the Hill of Fear (page 7) in the far northern wastes, a quest that was never fulfilled.

In later years, the Lossoth of the north came to this place and encamped as they hunted the gigantic Fastitocalon, the island-beast, of the cold northern waters. And that is a strange tale in itself, for it was to the Lossoth that Arvedui Last-king entrusted the Ring of Barahir, and Turin's mother was a close kinswoman of Barahir long ago. Fate drew the bones of Turin's mother and the keepers of her uncle's ring back together after many thousands of years.

This season, the Lossoth have been troubled by ghosts and evil spirits. They do not know what brought this woe to them, for the roots of this disturbance lie far to the east — but they are now trapped on the Isle, unable to sail for home.

LOCATIONS

1. THE CAMP OF THE LOSSOTH

On the shore, here dwell a tribe of Lossoth, the Snowmen of Forochel. Their leader is Jagat, a young hunter. The Lossoth speak a few words of the Common Tongue, and while they are unfriendly, they are not hostile to outsiders (if somewhat surprised to see any other living mortals in this part of the world). It's clear to the Player-heroes, though, that the Lossoth are watchful, as if they feared some other foe. They are gaunt and hollow-eyed, worn by harsh conditions.

Eagre is suspicious of the Snowmen — he declares his intent to remain on the *Seawing* while the Company goes ashore.

2. THE WRECK OF ELWING'S BOAT

Here on the shore is the wreck of the boat that brought Elwing and the Lossoth to this island. While the wreck has partially been plundered for firewood, it is still recognisable.

If Eagre sees the ship, he becomes convinced that the Lossoth attacked his daughter — see *Eagre's Wrath*, page 39.

3. STEEP SLOPES

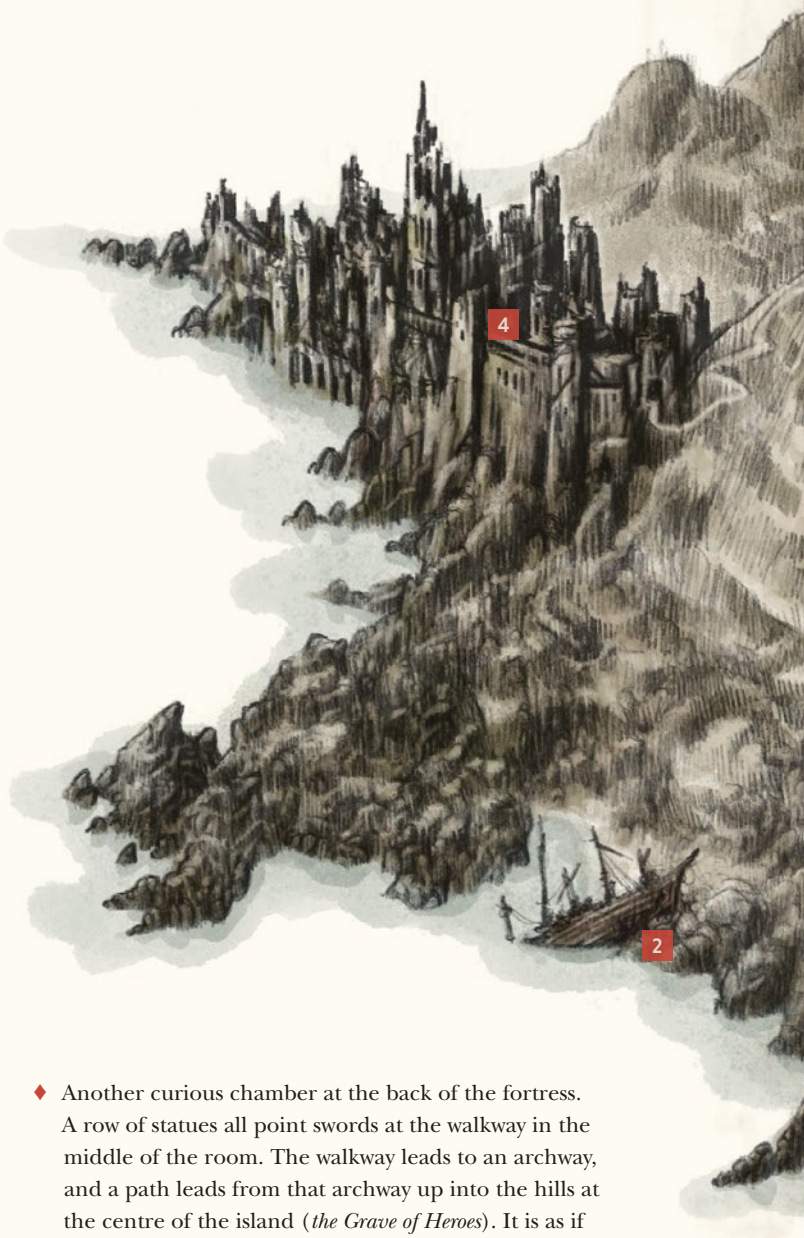
Some ancient convulsion of the earth lifted the central portion of the island up above the waters. Steep cliffs surround the heart of the Isle; it's almost impossible to climb, and those attempting to do so *lose (2d)* on their **ATHLETICS** roll.

4. THE NÚMENÓREAN FORTRESS

Three thousand years of wild storms and raging waves mean that little of this once-mighty fortress remains. The great mariners of Númenor built this stronghold partly as an outpost on their northern approaches, but also as a place of pilgrimage for heroes and scholars. The great sheltered anchorage with its sea-walls and shining jetties is gone now, and toppled are the towers that once looked west over the endless ocean and drowned lands. But a portion of the keep remains, partially lost beneath the dunes.

Exploring the accessible portion of the fortress, the heroes find:

- A carving depicting a lineage of heroes of old of the line of Men. Unless the characters are skilled in **LORE**, many of those depicted will be mysteries to them — Barahir and Beren, Húrin and Turin, Tuor and Huor, Eärendil and Elros. The furthest portion of the carving is lost beneath the sands that choke much of the fortress. If excavated and exposed, the carving is found to depict a great standing stone on a hilltop, and hints at an eerie figure who sits in its shadow.
- A room that once was clearly a forge. Oddly, this is in somewhat better repair than the rest of the fortress, as if someone repaired it in the intervening centuries.



- Another curious chamber at the back of the fortress. A row of statues all point swords at the walkway in the middle of the room. The walkway leads to an archway, and a path leads from that archway up into the hills at the centre of the island (*the Grave of Heroes*). It is as if the statues are threatening or challenging the observer to prove themselves, and it takes a great act of courage to leave the fortress by that grim door.

5. THE OVERGROWN TRACK

This winding path, marked by more statues and Númenórean carvings, leads up to the upper portion of the Isle. Heroes trod this path of old, but now it is weed-strewn and overgrown with brambles.

THE ISLE OF THE MOTHER

JAGAT OF THE LOSSOTH

The leader of the hunters is clearly skilful and hardy, but it's curious that so young a Man has been given charge of such an expedition. Jagat speaks enough of the Common Tongue to communicate with the Player-heroes.

He explains that the Lossoth came to this island to hunt the beast of the northern ocean. The fabled island-beasts swim in deep waters, but come to shore near the Isle of the Mother, so only here can they be hunted.

> A successful LORE roll recalls tales of the Fastitocalon, called Limlug by the Elves, a sea-beast so large that it is often mistaken for an island, with trees growing upon its mighty shell. Such creatures are generally held to be myths; certainly, they are not encountered anywhere in Eriador or Rhovanion.

The Lossoth tribes do not sail on the open ocean, but sometimes in very cold winters, the sea-ice extends far enough south to make it possible to travel or row in small hide-covered canoes along the island chain. Such winters come only once a generation, so rarely do the Lossoth hunt the beasts, and successful hunts are even rarer. Young Jagat won his position by promising the other Lossoth an opportunity for such a hunt, regardless of the weather.

> A successful TRAVEL or INSIGHT roll notes an inconsistency in Jagat's tale – the recent winters, while bitter, have not been especially bad. The worst winter that might still be within living memory was the Fell Winter of 2911, and in comparison to that, the recent cold season was positively balmy. There is no way the ice stretched far enough south. The truth is that the Lossoth were aided in sailing here by Elwing.

Jagat warns that the islands in the chain are perilous in their own way – the Isle of Stone, the Isle of the Hungry, and this, the Isle of the Mother. The stories of the Lossoth describe how to avoid these dangers. The shore of this island is safe, but it is dangerous to go inland. The ghost of an old Woman dwells there. Old stories of the Lossoth warn against entering the wood.

"The old fortress on the western shore is dangerous too," he says. *"Leave the stone places to the Men of the Sea."*

In recent weeks, the ghosts have been especially angry. The camp of the Snowmen has been attacked by phantoms, and no boats can leave the island. The Lossoth know chants and spells to drive away some evil spirits, and have in the past made offerings to the Witch-king who rules the ice, but their spells do not avail them against this new crop of ghosts. Something has changed; the Witch-king is angry with them. If they cannot find a way to calm the ghosts, they will remain trapped here.

If the characters ask about Eagre's daughter Elwing, then Jagat frowns. He knows her. She sailed all the way to the Ice-bay of Forochel, and dwelt amid the Lossoth-tribe for a time. She told them tales of the island her father visited long ago, and the Lossoth recognised it as this very isle, where they come to hunt the island-beasts. Between the old Lossoth stories and the stories Elwing's father told her, they were able to find the way to the Isle, and Jagat and his followers sailed with Elwing.

Soon after they landed here, however, a strange mood took her, and Elwing went up into the forest where it is not wise to go. The ghosts came soon after that. He does not wish to blame Elwing for rousing the ghosts, but suspects there is a strong connection between the two.

THE WITCH-KING

Scholars may note that the Witch-king was defeated in T.A. 1975, and the realm of Angmar cast down, but the King of Angmar remains a figure of mythic terror to the Lossoth, and they insist he still troubles the world.

6. THE STONE OF THE HAPLESS

Here, on the highest spot of the island, is a green burial-mound, and atop the mound is a carved grave-marker, a great square-sided stone. Words are engraved on this ancient stone by two different hands, but neither inscription can be read for the stone is so worn by thousands of years of wind and rain.

7. THE HAUNTED WOOD

Spirits — the same evil spirits who brought a storm down on the characters as they arrived at the Isle — haunt this wood. Most are bodiless, able only to affect the weather or to strike fear into the hearts of mortals, but others have taken on physical form, inhabiting the corpses of those who have perished here. Some wear the bodies of Lossoth-hunters who came here in the Fell Winter of 2911; others are skeletons garbed in leaf-mould and bramble, crawling things of yellow and rotten bone.

While these spirits can be found throughout the wood, they cluster around the hollow (location 8) — except when anyone tries to leave the Isle by sea, in which case the spirits leap into the sky and whip up a storm.

MEETING THE MOURNER

As the heroes explore the mound near the Stone of the Hapless (location 6), they suddenly become aware that there is an old, old Woman sitting in the shadow of the stone. She is a ghost, or something like a ghost. If she had a name, it is long lost. Now, she is closer to an archetype; she is every mother who mourns her lost son, taken by war or questing; she is everyone left behind when a loved one goes down the Road to adventure. Call her the Mourner.

The characters likely recognise her as the figure from their dreams.

"My son lies here," she whispers, *"and the waters took my daughter. They fought the Enemy, and all that was left to me was sorrow and stories. They are gone. They are gone, and I weep."* She looks up at the characters, and her gaze is like a spear of ice. *"Others have come here, so many others. Stories brought them, and sorrow follows them. To them I said, go home. Live and laugh. Turn aside from the quest."* She lowers her head again. *"They never listen. But it has been a long, long time since any came here. I dared think I might sleep, but now the Shadow is rising once again, and the stories are retold. To you I say: Go home. Live and laugh. Turn aside from the quest. Only doom waits for you."*

Ask each of the Player-heroes if they wish to follow the ghost's advice and give up adventuring. On the off-chance that a player decides to retire their hero, their next one gains +5 points to their Previous Experience. That player continues to play their hero until the end of the current Adventuring Phase, and may then create a replacement Player-hero with more of an appetite for peril.

Once they have all declared their intention to continue, the ghost turns to the Heir.

"One of your kinsmen came here, many years ago. He should have heeded my words; instead, now he too is bound to this world of sorrow. I say to you a third time – turn aside. Go home."

If the Heir continues to refuse, the ghost extends a bony finger, pointing deeper into the wood, and then vanishes.

Wights and Wraiths

The spirits haunting the island come in two forms — embodied Wood-wights and disembodied Unhoused Wraiths. The Wood-wights lurk in the underbrush or buried in shallow graves, waiting for unwary victims. If a traveller perishes, a disembodied wight gains a new physical shell to dwell in. The Unhoused Wraiths torment and bewilder travellers in the wood; they strike fear into their hearts, cause their sight to darken, and make the terrain impossibly confusing and scary. When a disembodied wraith is nearby, the trees seem to move and whisper; tree-roots and branches claw at the travellers, and a foul and freezing wind howls through the wood.

WOOD-WIGHTS
Dreadful, Rotten

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 4

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
16	1	4	—	2

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Claws (4/14, Seize)

FELL ABILITIES: *Denizen of the Dark*. All attack rolls are Favoured while in darkness.

Fear of Fire. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is engaged in close combat with an adversary wielding a torch or other sort of burning item.

Deathless. Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound. Spend 1 Hate to reset to full Endurance when reduced to zero Endurance. Ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a Bane weapon (Undead).

Heartless. This creature is unaffected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

Thing of Terror. At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more creatures with this ability gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

UNHOUSED WRAITHS
Hungry, Fierce

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL: 1

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
4	1	4	—	0

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: —

FELL ABILITIES: *Bodyless*. The creature cancels all Endurance loss and Wounds that do not come from fire or weapons with a Bane of the Undead.

Fear of Fire. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is engaged in close combat with an adversary wielding a torch or other sort of burning item.

Heartless. This creature is unaffected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

Invisible. This creature is invisible, and AWARENESS, HUNTING, SCAN, and attack rolls against it *lose (2d)* and are *Ill-favoured*. A Player-hero who obtains a Magical success on an AWARENESS or SCAN roll can see the creature normally and ignores all penalties for the rest of the fight.

Strike Fear. Spend 1 Hate to make all Player-heroes in sight gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

8. THE HOLLOW

In the heart of the eastern portion of the wood is a small, shallow cave, a hole in the hillside. The wights lurk in the shadows of the trees here, but dare not enter the cave for fear of the sword that rests there.

Elwing daughter of Eagre is trapped within the cave — and, buried in the mud where she lies, is the hilt of an ancient sword. A skeletal hand still clutches the sword. (Optionally, if you wish to gird other characters with magical items, there might be other treasures in the grave too.)

When the Heir first sees the sword, take them aside and run *The Heir's Vision*, page 39.

If a character draws the sword from the mud, they find that the blade is quite crudely made, as if forged in haste or by one who had little smith-craft. That said, veins of some curious black substance run through the steel, and have gathered at the point and edges of the blade, which have remained keen despite long centuries of neglect. See *The Hero's Sword*, page 40.

The Wood-wights are bound to destroy the wielder of the blade, even though they fear its touch. See *The Sword and the Wights*, page 40.

ELWING

Eagre's daughter has been trapped in this cave by the Wood-wights for weeks. She is half-mad with hunger and terror, and half-dead from exposure, but still she clings to life. If she were well, she could tell the heroes how she came here — how she sailed north, following her father's example, and ended up living with the Lossoth of the Ice-bay. If she were well, she could speak of the journey with Jagat to this isle, and the strange dreams that drew her to the Stone of the Hapless. She could speak of how the old Woman's ghost showed her a vision of her father Eagre, drunk and despairing in the shadows of the Queen's Hall in Lond Daer. She could proudly proclaim that she rejected the old ghost's vision and pressed on into the wood, to where she found this sword.

And if she had not found the sword, she might still be well. Touching the sword roused the Wood-wights, and nearly drove her mad with the memory of ancient fears. Now, all that Elwing can do is moan and mutter about the *'dreadful hill'* and the *'oath'* and *'the pursuing shadows.'*

If the characters bring her down out of the wood and get her back to safety, then she might be healed at Rivendell or Mithlond, or restored by patient care in her father's house. But right now, Elwing is unwell, and needs the characters' help.

SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

THE SUSPICION OF THE LOSSOTH

The Lossoth are not mariners, and do not sail on the open ocean. Jagat's followers were swayed by his promises of an unseasonable hunt for the island-beast, and convinced to sail with Elwing in her boat to this island, but now they fear they have made a terrible mistake. Elwing's boat is wrecked, the Sea-woman is gone, and they are assailed by evil spirits. When the Player-heroes and Eagre arrive, the Lossoth begin to grumble. "*Should we not take this second boat and sail home, no matter what Jagat says?*" suggests one. "*All boats are bad luck,*" observes another, "*and bring ill-fortune to those who sail in them. We ruined our luck by sailing in Elwing's ship, and taking this second boat would only make things worse.*"

And a third whispers, *"the old stories say it is the Witch-king who controls the winds and holds the fealty of ghosts. We must win his favour if we are to survive. Of old our ancestors knew spells and offerings that pleased him, and I still remember some of them. Let his enemies be our enemies."*

The Lossoth do not immediately disobey Jagat or turn on the Player-heroes — but if it seems like the Player-heroes offer no solution to the plight of the Lossoth, or if Eagre acts against them, then the Lossoth may rise up against Jagat and attack the heroes. Assume two hunters per hero.

LOSSOTH HUNTER
Tough, Wary

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 4

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	RESOLVE	PARRY	ARMOUR
16	1	4	+1	2

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Spear 3 (4/14, Pierce)

FELL ABILITIES: *Thick Hide*. Spend 1 Resolve to *gain (2d)* on a Protection roll.

EAGRE'S WRATH

If Eagre suspects that his daughter Elwing is lost forever through shipwreck or misadventure, then he blames the Lossoth and calls on the Player-heroes to support him in demanding answers — and even then, he is loath to believe any answers he gets. A successful **PERSUADE** or **ENHEARTEN** roll can convince Eagre to stay his hand, as can promising to search for Elwing. However, if the characters ignore Eagre's worries or fail to calm him, then he may attack the Lossoth or attempt to leave the Isle on board the *Seawing*, abandoning the Player-heroes.

THE HEIR'S VISION

If the Heir touches the sword, they have a strange waking dream. They see someone crouched in the hollow, next to the blade — it is their ancestor, the Hero. The shade of the ancient hero speaks to them, saying:

Three times I came to this grave, this sacred land.
Once when I was young and brave, and sought adventure.
Through adventure I won glory at the King's right hand.
Again when the King charged me with a great quest:
To break the darkness under Amon Guruthos.
My courage failed me, and I fled into the west.
I forged a sword and my courage anew.
I found brave companions and set out again.
But it was not enough. The darkness broke us.
I alone survived. I fled, pursued by phantoms.
A third time I returned. A third time pays for all.
A third time I came to the grave of heroes to die, and wait for thee.

NEW FELLOWSHIP UNDERTAKING: JOURNEY TO THE STONE OF THE HAPLESS

Great power and majesty they still wore, the silent wardens of a long-vanished kingdom.

By visiting the graves on the Isle of the Mother, and considering how those buried there struggled against the enemy, a weary Hero may find new purpose.

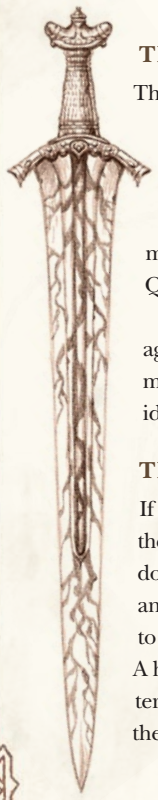
Choose this Undertaking to recover a number of points of Hope equal to the number of Shadow Scars you bear.

NEW FELLOWSHIP UNDERTAKING: HUNT WITH THE LOSSOTH

The counsel of the Lossoth was good, by chance or foresight.

A hero may contribute to the well-being of the Lossoth-folk and win their trust by going hunting with them along the shores of the Ice-bay of Forochel.

Choose this Undertaking to count the Lossoth summer camp on the southern coast of the Ice-bay as a safe haven for the duration of the next Adventuring Phase.



THE HERO'S SWORD

The sword forged by the long-dead hero is named *Estelang*, the Unyielding Hope. The sword is notable for the strange black veins that run through the blade, traces of some other metal that adulterates the steel. It is a blade of Númenórean Craftsmanship, and is made to be the *Bane of Undead and Evil Men*. It has the Qualities of *Superior Fell*, *Superior Grievous*, and *Keen*.

It also has another magical property — when wielded against Undead, it removes their Heartless fell ability, and makes them Craven instead (when affected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, that creature also loses 1 Hate).

THE SWORD AND THE WIGHTS

If a Player-hero — ideally, the Heir — claims the sword, then all the Wood-wights converge on the hollow. No longer do they haunt the wood, no longer do they ride the winds and call up storms; they all rush towards the sword, seeking to destroy the new wielder and end the threat of the sword. A howling darkness gathers, shaking the trees and striking terror into the hearts of the heroes. On the shore below, the Lossoth hide, dismayed by this newest terrible omen.

HUNTING THE FASTITOCALON

The great Fastitocalon, called Limlug by the Elves, is a tremendous beast — not serpent, nor whale, nor turtle, but partaking of elements of all three. The creatures grow a carapace or shell as armour, but as they age so much dirt and debris catches on the upper plates of this armour that elder beasts have been mistaken for islands.

Should the Loremaster want to test the mettle of the Company, they may be made to encounter the Fastitocalon while sailing in the northern seas, or while hunting with the Lossoth. Facing the great sea-beast is worthy of an adventure by itself.

FASTITOCALON
Fierce, Vengeful

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 10

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	RESOLVE	PARRY	ARMOUR
120	3	10	—	4

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Bite 3 (6/20, Pierce), Thrash 3 (10/12, Break Shield)

FELL ABILITIES: *Hideous Toughness*. When an attack inflicts damage to the Fastitocalon that would cause it to go to zero Endurance, it causes a Piercing Blow instead. Then, if the creature is still alive, it returns to full Endurance.

Horrible Strength. If the creature scores a Piercing Blow, spend 1 Resolve to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

Thick Hide. Spend 1 Resolve to *gain (2d)* on a Protection roll.

The characters have two options.

- They could break the sword, or throw it into the ocean, or otherwise render it beyond use. This does deal with the threat of the Wood-wights — with the sword gone, the spirits' task is done, and they can return to the Hill of Fear.
- The other, more perilous but more worthy, option is to hold against the tide of darkness. The characters must survive a battle with a host of Wood-wights. The Wood-wights all suffer from *Fear of Fire*, so between the magic of the sword and a bonfire, the characters have a chance of success. Assume there is one Wood-wight per Player-hero, plus countless Unhoused Wraiths — but if all the Wood-wights are defeated, the spirits flee.

If the Player-heroes are in dire need, then offer the Heir a choice. If the Heir takes on the burden of their ancestor's oath, then all the Player-heroes *gain (1d)* on all attack rolls and Shadow tests, and enemies *lose (1d)* on all attack rolls for the rest of the combat. However, the oath now binds the Heir, and they must dedicate themselves to destroying the Hill of Fear — a task no hero has accomplished in all the Ages of the world.

PART 4: HOMEWARD BOUND

Once the spirits are defeated, travellers may once again depart from the Isle.

Elwing's ship can be repaired with wood from the forest, given time. Alternatively, the Lossoth may crowd onto the *Seawing* alongside the Player-heroes. If Eagre and the Lossoth are on good terms, he gives them passage as far as the edge of the Ice Bay of Forochel; otherwise, he leaves them on the coast of Lindon, from where they must make their own way home.

If the characters part on good terms with the Lossoth, then Jagat invites them to visit their cold homeland in Forodwaith, and suggests they return to the Isle of the Mother in some future year to hunt the Fastitocalon. *"Surely,"* he says, *"we will have better luck then."*

Shaken by his experience and the travails of his daughter, Eagre hastens to return to the safety of Lond Daer. No more will he tell stories of wild voyages and heroic exploits; he now intends to stay close to home, and to cherish what he has. He encourages Elwing, too, to give up her wandering.

In Lond Daer, the seer Aglaen is alarmed to discover that his vision proved mostly correct. He has spent years being an unsuccessful astrologer; to have an accurate prediction shakes him to his bones.

Gandalf, if he encouraged the heroes to set off on the quest, says nothing, but his gaze lingers on the sword recovered from the Isle, and he draws on his pipe with quiet satisfaction.

SEEKING AMON GURUTHOS

The location of Amon Guruthos, the Hill of Fear, is a mystery.

Old tales suggest it lies somewhere in the trackless wastes of the Forodwaith, beyond the mountains of Angmar. Other accounts note that the Hill is 'black as a burnt heath', which does not fit at all with a location in the snowy lands of the far north.

> Elwing, if questioned about her time with the Lossoth, has no knowledge of such a Hill — but she does mention that the Lossoth were ill-at-ease, as if troubled by bad dreams, and there were rumours of Orcs moving in the far north.

Even if a character has sworn an oath to destroy the Hill, charging off into the wilderness without any clue of where they are going or what they will do there is utter folly. A wiser option is to seek out scholars and lore-masters who might know something of the wars of old.

- A Patron like Círdan or Gandalf can warn the character about the perils of the Hill; how it has long been a stronghold of evil powers, and how even the bravest souls have fled the darkness beneath — but even they do not know precisely where the Hill might be.
- Elrond, the Loremaster of Rivendell, knows more specifically where the Hill is located — it lies beyond the Mountains of Angmar, in the lonely land between the last mountain and the Ice Bay of Forochel. However, the Hill is said to be hard to find, and the paths around it are treacherous.

  One member of Elrond's household has been to the Hill. Glorfindel went there in the days after the Battle of Fornost, and entered into the caves below. If asked, the Elf-lord shakes his head. *"I saw nothing. Bones and dust, but nothing more. Whatever power once resided there was gone — fled, I would guess, into the darkness beyond the circles of this world. But if it was not destroyed, then it could be called back by the malice of the Enemy."* Glorfindel recalls approaching the hill via an underground tunnel; he hunted Orcs and Trolls in the dark places there.

A LAST DREAM

Pick one of the Player-heroes. That character has one last dream some weeks after leaving the Isle of the Mother. They dream of the day they left the Isle, and in the dream they look back to the shore, and there they see the figure of the ghostly Mourner keening on the shore. The island beyond seems to change, the waters somehow becoming the snowy plains of the north, the mound becoming a dark and terrible hill — the Hill of Fear.

All the character hears is the weeping of the Mourner as the shadow of that hill rises up and crushes the little boat carrying the Company. They are all lost in the darkness.

But it was only a dream.

CHAPTER 3

KINGS OF LITTLE KINGDOMS

That's haunted land, they say.
None but a robber would go there.

If you have heard a quarter of the tales about Gandalf, then you will know the sort of dangerous person he is. Off wandering the road without so much as a by-your-leave, drifting from town to town like some sort of vagabond. The things he does! Encouraging young lads and lasses to go off on adventures of all sorts! And the worst thing is, no-one has the courage to put a stop to his meddling! Even formerly respectable sorts, Gentlehobbits like the Old Took or Baggins of Bag End, or sober businessmen like Butterbur — they indulge the old rogue, when they should be setting the Shirriffs on him!

No, Gandalf is bad news.

So when a mother pleads with the Player-heroes to fetch her son Hamfast back from Gandalf's company, what do they do?

This adventure is assumed to start in Bree, but it works best if the young lad is related to one of the Player-heroes — so, instead of a Bree-boy named Hamfast as the quarry of this quest, you could substitute a Hobbit-lass named Daisy or an impressionable Dwarf called Grungi, or even a visiting trader from far-off Dale. (Neither Elves nor Rangers are suitable, as should be plain.)

The False Wizard

In truth, this has nothing to do with Gandalf at all — the villain of this piece is an outlaw named Osmer. Everyone's heard of Gandalf, and everyone knows what he looks like, so it was easy for Osmer to hide his features behind a big white beard, some false eyebrows and a grey cloak and wide-brimmed hat. Now all of Osmer's crimes will be attributed to Gandalf, and if anyone comes looking for him, he can strip off his disguise in a trice. Taking Gandalf's identity also makes it easy for Osmer to recruit new henchmen — poor simple Hamfast thinks he is off on an adventure, while he has actually fallen in with a band of outlaws…

OTHER ROADS TO ADVENTURE

The Loremaster may wish to move this adventure to somewhere other than Bree; if that is the case, then the descriptions and names presented in the text must be adjusted accordingly.

Other ways to involve the Player-heroes include:

- A Ranger or Patron asks the Company to deal with thieves on the road east of Bree.
- While travelling, the Company is caught in bad weather, and must take shelter in the House of Farrell.
- If you played through *A Troll-hole, if Ever There Was One* (page 9), then Scylda might be the impressionable youth lured away by "Gandalf".

ALTERNATE FOOLISH YOUTHS

LOCATION	FOOLISH YOUTH	TROUBLED MOTHER
Bree	Hamfast	Lucinda Willow
Whitfurrows	Daisy	Bella Brockhouse
Halls of the Dwarves	Grungi	Freri
On the Road	Sigfred	Una

PART 1: A MOTHER'S PLEA

The heroes are stopped by Lucinda Willow of Bree. If she's related to one of the Player-heroes, then she approaches her relative with a worried look on her face. Otherwise, she introduces herself more violently, swatting one of the heroes with her broom and accosting them. *"You're one of them adventurers, aren't you? Well, what are you going to do about my Hamfast?"*

Between sobs (or whacks from the broom), Lucinda reveals:

- Her son Hamfast left home two weeks ago and went off into the Wild. She knows he's gone in the direction of Deadman's Dike (if you move the adventure west to Ered Luin, then replace that with another location connected with the old kingdom of Arthedain).
- She's heard that 'the old Wizard Gandalf' was hanging around Bree at the same time, and that he was talking to Hamfast. Clearly, the Wizard has bewitched her boy, or at least filled his head with all sorts of nonsense.
- Gandalf told Hamfast that there was treasure to be found up at the Dike, and that they needed a great warrior to help defend the expedition.
- *"Ham's no hero. He's not the sort to go swinging swords or fighting Trolls. He left the house without so much as a travelling cloak, the big idiot! Please, please, go get him back."*

THE MYSTERY OF GANDALF

While Player-heroes who have never met Gandalf may see nothing untoward in this tale of a Wizard recruiting some farmboy for an epic quest, characters who have met him or have him as a Patron may have reason to be suspicious. Something about the tale just sounds off. If they press Lucinda for a description of Gandalf, they spot inconsistencies — the Wizard's hat is blue, not grey, and he wears a silver scarf. His beard is long, but not especially bristly, and his eyebrows are not merely prominent, but astounding. It sounds like someone masquerading as the Wizard…

LOOKING FOR RUMOURS

If the Player-heroes ask around the neighbourhood, they learn that Gandalf was seen in several other places nearby — in taverns, on the road, and in the company of some rough-looking Men. None of these places are Gandalf's usual haunts; for example, if the Company is in Bree, then Gandalf did not visit the Pony, but was instead observed extorting free drinks at the bar of the Lamplighter Inn in Staddle (see *The One Ring*, page 186).

INTRIGUE IN THE HILLS

Osmer — the would-be outlaw chief who's disguising himself as a Wizard — has a plan. On a previous journey, he discovered the ruins of an old watchtower, close to the East road. That, he thought to himself, would be a marvellous spot from which to rob travellers. There are two obstacles to this plan — one known, and one unknown.

The known obstacle is the House of Farrell, a farmstead located only a short distance from the ruined watchtower. Osmer intends to murder Farrell, or at least force the old farmer to serve him, and claim the farmstead for his own. Osmer's first attack on Farrell's farmhouse met with unexpected difficulties, but he intends to try again.

The unknown obstacle is a misfortune that Osmer could not have predicted, even if he really was a Wizard. Far away in the north, beyond the Mountains of Angmar, the Hill of Fear is stirring, woken by agents of the Enemy. Spirits and wraiths are abroad in the land once more, and one such shade has inhabited the corpse of a long-dead warrior.

A warrior who is interred in the crypt of the very tower Osmer intends to occupy…

PART 2: FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

According to Lucinda, Hamfast and "Gandalf" were heading towards Deadman's Dike (see *The One Ring*, page 196), so the heroes have some idea where to go. A successful **HUNTING** roll lets them pick up the trail without delay (a failed roll means the Company takes the wrong route and must double back, adding a few days to their journey).

The journey takes the Company away from the road, into the Lone-lands. "Gandalf" takes a curious route, for the trail leads through thorny thickets and trudges through marshes full of biting flies. Stranger still, the route no longer heads towards Deadman's Dike, but follows a long loop that arcs east, then south until the Company find themselves heading back towards the road.

Finally, they come to a fold in the hills east of Weathertop (If you've moved this adventure, then it's near some other point on the Road, or a river crossing — anywhere that would make a good lair for outlaws!).

Ahead, on a hilltop, they see a fortified farmstead surrounded by a sturdy wall. Smoke rises from its chimney — and also from the smouldering remains of one of the outhouses. Some misfortune has recently befallen the place.

Bree-folk or experienced travellers in these parts know the House of Farrell. The farmer and his kin live on the edge of the wild, for Farrell has no great love of people. His sons bring their cart into the market at Archet every few months, but they scowl all the while as if meeting with anyone not of their family is a great imposition. In years past, Farrell's father gave grudging shelter to passing Rangers, but of late Rangers are more likely to be told to stay off his land lest he set the dogs on them. Still, while rude and unpleasant, he's not an Evil Man — he may dislike his fellow Men, but he's no friend of Orcs.

If the heroes approach the house, run *Part 3: The House of Farrell.*

The trail peters out amid the scree fallen from the heights; an extraordinary **HUNTING** success could find more of a trail leading to *Part 4: The Ruined Tower* (page 49).

PART 3: THE HOUSE OF FARRELL

If the characters approach Farrell's house after nightfall, or with weapons drawn, then Farrell and his family loose arrows and hurl stones at them, and shout at them to begone! Dogs bark loudly behind the walls of the compound, and it is clear that the farmstead was expecting some attack. A **COURTESY** roll convinces them to stop their counter-assault.

If the characters approach in broad daylight and do not appear threatening, then they're hailed by Farrell as they climb the path towards his house. *"What do you want?"* he demands. If convinced that the Player-heroes are not immediately hostile, he coughs loudly, spits, and invites them into his compound (but not his house) to talk to them out of the wind.

AN AUDIENCE WITH FARRELL

Farrell shows the characters a spot sheltered from the constant wailing wind by his high walls. There are two old benches there, and a firepit. He sits on one bench, a sword across his lap. His two sons (Farrell the younger and Farweld) stand behind him. His wife Ernalda, his daughters-in-law Poppy and Tulla, and a few servants watch nervously from the house. His dogs prowl around, sniffing at the newcomers before lying down by the fire.

While there is no need for a full Council scene here, Farrell is suspicious of strangers, and unwelcoming. Players may try to win his favour by showing respect, or by telling a tale or singing a song (rolls of **RIDDLE**, **COURTESY** or **SONG** can help; Farrell remains suspicious and rude towards any characters who fail). During the meeting, Farrell launches into a litany of complaints, directed at whichever character seems to be in charge. He complains that there are more people on the Road in recent years, more Dwarves and Bardings and other strange folk, coming over the mountains and bringing their strangeness with them. With the next breath he grumbles that there are too few people on the Road lately, and that something should be done about all the outlaws. He complains that there are all sorts of troublemakers about these days, Orcs and Goblins and Bandits, and numbers Rangers among them.

If asked about either Hamfast and "Gandalf", Farrell says the only people he's seen around lately are the outlaws who tried to raid his farmstead last night. They came up the hill and tried to climb over the wall into the chicken coop, and young Farweld here raised the alarm. The intruders had weapons, and struck at some of Farrell's household, and he and his boys responded in kind. No one was slain, as far as he knows, but he believes some of the outlaws were wounded.

- No one knows where the outlaws went, but some of them were limping, having been struck in the legs with arrows. They can't have gone far. A successful **INSIGHT** or **RIDDLE** roll suggests Farrell knows more about the hiding place of the outlaws than he is willing to reveal at this point. (Farrell suspects the outlaws are hiding in the ruined tower, but cannot be sure — and would prefer to keep the adventurers guarding his farmstead instead of running off into the wild).
- If asked, Farrell the Younger volunteers that he thinks he saw a *"tall, bearded old man with a pointy hat"* directing the assault on the chicken coop. He has never met Gandalf, but his father Farrell the Elder knows the Wizard by reputation, and is convinced he is a fraud. (*"Fireworks and cheap tricks, feh!"*)
- A roll of **SCAN** notes that Farweld is oddly silent, despite being the one who raised the alarm. If questioned, he admits that he was up at night because he thinks he saw something. His father grumbles that the

boy is soft-headed and dream-addled and there is no point in listening to him, but if reassured (or asked privately) Farweld says that he swears he saw a *"giant walking down from the north, like a man made of snow and darkness, only tall as a mountain"*.

Assuming the Player-heroes have not offended him, Farrell grudgingly suggests that they can stay the night *"not as guests, mind you!"* They can earn their keep clearing out the remains of the burnt shed. And if the raiders return, why, it would be good to have more eager hands to defend the House.

Farrell the Elder

One has to be tough to survive here on the edge of the Wild, and Farrell is certainly tough, like old leather. He is the petty tyrant of his little dominion, and tolerates no dissent among his family or servants, but he is not deliberately cruel — merely impatient and hot-tempered. The growing weakness of his ageing body frustrates him, as he believes that neither of his sons are ready to take over as head of the household.

OCCUPATION: Farmer

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Stern, Rustic

Other Members of the Household

ERNALDA, Farrell's Wife is a quiet, calm contrast to her foul-tempered husband. She is descended from wild folk who once dwelled in the shadowy valleys of old Rhudaur, and never speaks of her past. She is devoted to Farrell and will never speak against him.

FARRELL'S SONS: The elder boy, Farrell the Younger, is convinced that he is more than ready to take over as head of the household, and that his father is fit for nothing but drinking by the fire and telling stories of the good old days. He is married to Poppy, a Woman of Bree, who agrees that old Farrell should give the farmstead over to her husband. She and Ernalda quarrel bitterly.

His younger brother Farweld is a day-dreamer, enchanted by stories of heroes and monsters, but he neglects his chores. His father arranged a marriage for Farweld to Tulla, Poppy's younger sister. Tulla hates living here in the middle of nowhere and yearns to return to Bree.

A Night at Farrell's House

Several events happen during the night. The Loremaster should consider having one event befall each member of the Company, so one character overhears Farrell's sons conspiring, another has bad dreams, a third spots the lurking outlaws and so forth.

FARRELL DRINKS HEAVILY

After a meagre and grudging supper, Farrell the Elder produces a bottle of wine from the Southfarthing and proceeds to drink it all himself. Half-drunk, he wobbles over and ties up his two dogs near the main gate so they can keep watch. (*"Better sentries than all of ye!"* he mutters.) He grows angry if anyone questions him, and barks out orders to keep watch for a second attack until he finally falls asleep and snores loudly. If woken, he leaps up, brandishing the empty bottle as a weapon. If any of the Player-heroes are unlucky enough to cross his path, then he seizes upon some aspect of their personality or appearance that annoys him and berates them at length.

THE SONS CONSPIRE

Farrell the younger and Farweld meet in secret in a shadowy corner of the compound. Both are nervous — Farrell fears that they won't be able to protect the farmstead, and that once the adventurers leave, they'll be overrun. Farweld mutters about the giant he saw last night, and fears that it signifies approaching danger.

If an adventurer makes themself known, then Farrell the Younger asks them for their counsel — what should Farrell do about his stubborn father? The world is becoming darker and more dangerous with each passing year, and old Farrell will not change. How long should a son wait for his father to see sense?

FIRE IN THE VALLEY

While looking out at the dark valley, and the moonlit ribbon of the Road, a keen-eyed Player-hero spots a flash of flame in the distance — a successful **SCAN** roll allows them to determine that someone has lit a torch with a flint. The light vanishes a moment later, but the character now knows the location of the old watchtower.

BAD DREAMS

A sleeping Player-hero has a strange and disturbing dream of a great hill, black against a snowy landscape. Somehow, the character feels that the hill is getting closer, or larger, like it is going to crash down on them or swallow them up, like a wave of earth tumbling into a grave… the disturbing dream is worth 1 Shadow point (Dread).

The character is not the only person in the farmstead to have such a dream; some of the servants are troubled by the same vision, as is Farweld. He interprets it as another vision of the giant he's dreamed of before, and wakes in terror, screaming for help. His young wife Tulla comforts him, but grumbles to anyone nearby that this sort of thing never happened back home in Bree, and curses the fate that brought her to this desolate farmstead.

A SHAPE IN THE DARK

One character (ideally, an Elf) senses an eerie presence that troubles their rest. Looking out, they glimpse for a moment a shape moving in the valley, and hear a distant howling on the cold north wind. A successful **AWARENESS** roll lets them spot the dark shape descending towards a tangled thicket near the road (the location of the ruined tower.)

INTRUDERS!

A Look-out or other watchman spots movement about the lower slopes of the hill. A successful **AWARENESS** roll (*lose (1d)* due to the darkness) allows them to distinguish a pair of outlaws climbing up. These outlaws do not attempt to enter the compound, but instead throw a parcel over the wall to land near the main gate. Unless stopped, the dogs fall upon the parcel eagerly and devour it. If intercepted, the parcel is found to contain a lump of raw meat.

The two intruders flee back down the hill; they can be followed back to the ruined tower.

SICK DOGS

If the dogs ate the parcel, then they both fall sick — Osmer poisoned the meat. The dogs perish unless a Player-hero succeeds at a **HEALING** roll.

Farrell Awakes

The next morning, Farrell the Elder awakens, much the worse for wear. He grumbles about how badly he slept — stupid dreams about a dark tower, or a hill, or somesuch. Oh, the adventurers are still here? Well, if they want breakfast, they'll have to pay again, given they were no help repelling attackers during the night…

FARRELL'S MADNESS

The shadow of the Hill of Fear falls across Farrell the Elder in this adventure. His dreams of the dark hill — and the growing burden of despair that comes with those dreams — may not be especially important to the events of Kings of Little Kingdoms, but if the Player-heroes return to the farmstead in later years, they see the effects of the Hill on Farrell. He seems to age faster and faster, and is consumed with thoughts of death. He grows ever more jealous of the youth of his sons, and quarrels with them, until eventually he strikes Farrell the Younger while in a drunken stupor, killing the young Man. Over time, the other members of his household flee one by one, until only Farweld remains with his father. The two sit up in the dark of the night, listening to whispers from the ruined tower...

PART 4: THE RUINED TOWER

Not far ahead were dreary hills, rising higher and higher, dark with trees. On some of them were old castles with an evil look, as if they had been built by wicked people.

RUMOUR

It's dangerous to leave the Road. You might fall into some long-abandoned cellar or sunken path, and break a leg, and then where are you? Lost and alone and meat for Trolls, what's where! Don't leave the path!

OLD LORE

The borders of the former kingdoms are dotted with ruins of watch-towers and border forts. The heirs of Elendil grew to mistrust each other, and built many castles on their borders as they squabbled over territory. Then, war came from Angmar, and they built yet more fortifications to defend against the dark hosts of the Witch-king. Alas! Many of the secrets of building were lost over the centuries, and the Men of the later kingdoms were forced to loot the ancient monuments of Arnor for good stone. They tore down palaces and tombs to build their little castles, and who knows what things of beauty and worth were lost in those dark days?

BACKGROUND

In the days of Elendil there lived a spear-maiden named Gwendaith; she marched to war as part of the Last Alliance, and won honour in the battle against the Enemy. She fought in the siege of Barad-dûr, and when Anárion was slain, she guarded his body so that Orcs and Trolls might not defile it. She returned to the North-kingdom after the war, and was one of the counsellors of Valandil for a time. She ruled her domain well, and when her daughter was of age she gave up her spear and spent her last years studying and writing. In time, when her work was done, she breathed out her last strength and was laid to rest in a tomb built in the fashion of Númenor. This tomb was a monument by the Road, a square building of marble that flashed in the young sun. Inside, around the carven sarcophagus, were murals depicting the deeds of Gwendaith, and travellers came from far away to see this wonder. Above, on the upper level of the tomb, was a library where travellers could rest and peruse the teachings of Gwendaith.

Now, many centuries later, long after the North-kingdom was divided, the tomb was left unattended and it became overgrown. Mud filled the tomb, and the library was looted. Gwendaith's name and deeds were forgotten. When war came, soldiers in the service of some petty king found the remains of the tomb and said 'here is good stone and solid foundations, built with craft we have forgotten; let us quarry it to make a watchtower.' They discovered the tomb of Gwendaith as they did, but her spirit had gone to whatever fate awaits Mortals, and no ghost lingered there. The Men of Angmar overran the north, and the tower was forgotten once more, and it too fell into ruin. Ruin on ruin, that was the fate of the North-kingdom.

Some years ago, the outlaw Osmer found the overgrown remains of the tower, and saw that it was a good place to ambush travellers on the Road. However, he could not recruit more cut-throats to this plan, for it is a superstition among many in Eriador that the ruins of the old kingdoms are haunted. Osmer's solution was to masquerade as a Wizard, for surely a Wizard could drive away ghosts…

LOCATIONS

1. TO THE ROAD

The great East Road (or whatever thoroughfare you've situated the tower near) lies in this direction. From the top of the watchtower, approaching travellers can be seen at a distance in either direction, but the immediate area around the tower is hilly and overgrown, offering plenty of cover for stealth or ambush.

2. TO FARRELL'S HOUSE

Farrell's farmstead lies in this direction.

3. TANGLED BRACKEN AND UNDERGROWTH

Fox-paths run through this bracken, so the outlaws can move without impediment. Those who don't know the paths must trample through the thorn bushes — all attempts at **STEALTH** *lose (1d).*

4. OLD WALLS

The walls of the fallen watchtower are made of stone salvaged from the old tomb, so in places the stonework is excellent, in others less good. Weathered carvings leer from beneath the moss. The gaps in the walls are small enough that a single fighter could block entry.

5. THE BANDIT CAMP

The bandits — or 'adventurers' — make their lair here. There are more robbers than Player-heroes (assume two robbers per hero). About half the robbers are dark-hearted rogues and outlaws (use the stats for **Highway Robbers**); the others are new recruits (use the stats for **Footpads**), fooled by Osmer into running away on an adventure with 'Gandalf'. Osmer has told them that the House of Farrell is actually the fortress of an evil Wizard, and that the chickens are actually innocent children under a curse. He has also told them that the evil sorcerer can enchant people at a distance; if any of the outlaws feel doubt or think of leaving, then that's definitely Farrell trying to ensorcel them — and if any of them actually try to leave, then they must be under Farrell's spell, and must be stopped! (So, if poor Hamfast or any of the other outlaws tries to leave, they will be denounced as thralls of Farrell and attacked!)

Hamfast

3

Outlaws

Notable outlaws among the Company include:

- **HAMFAST**, the young Breelander that the heroes were sent to rescue. Impressionable and not that bright, Hamfast is only slowly realising that he's not on a heroic quest orchestrated by a Wizard.
- **BREGHEL**, an ambitious **Ruffian Chief** who considers himself Osmer's right-hand man (for now, at least – he will switch sides and attempt to take over the band if opportunity arises).
- **TAM**, an unlucky Man who suffered a blow to the head years ago. His wits are addled, so he is utterly convinced that Osmer is a genuine Wizard. He will stay loyal to Osmer no matter what. Use the stats for a **Southerner Raider**.

THE RUINED TOWER

Osmer the "Wizard"

Osmer is cursed with intelligence without wisdom, ambition without determination. He prefers to trick and think his way past problems, and believes everyone else is a fool who can be tricked or convinced to serve his purposes. He always blames others for his failures.

OSMER THE "WIZARD"
Charlatan, Cunning

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	ENDURANCE	MIGHT	RESOLVE	PARRY	ARMOUR
4	16	1	4	+1	1

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Staff 3 (3/12), Sword 3 (4/16, Pierce)

FELL ABILITIES: *Yell of Triumph*. Spend 1 Resolve to restore 1 Resolve to all Evil Men in the fight.

Fireworks! Spend 1 Resolve to light and shoot Fireworks. Fireworks cause a Severe Endurance loss from fire to all Player-heroes in Close Combat stance or Rearward stance (Loremaster's choice), as per the rules on page 134 of *The One Ring*. Targets who lose at least 1 Endurance are also set on fire, suffering a Moderate Endurance loss at the end of each combat round, unless they put out the fire as their main action for the round.

6. THE "WIZARD'S" TOWER

Osmer claimed this upper room as his personal domain. Up here, he has stashed his 'wizardly accoutrements'; some jars filled with coloured water, a pile of old books that, on examination, turn out to be old ledgers from the *Forsaken Inn* (*The One Ring*, page 190), some chalk for inscribing mystic diagrams and runes, and a sack of fireworks from Dale, as well as the proceeds of previous outlawry (a Lesser Hoard).

7. THE SUNKEN STAIRS

These stairs lead down to the cellars of the old watchtower. To avoid detection by the 'evil Wizard', Osmer forbids the outlaws to light any fires in the open; if they want to cook or stay warm, they have to go down and build a fire in the cellar.

8. CELLARS/LOWER TOMB

These cellars once contained the tomb of Gwendaith. The slow settling of the land filled the chamber with earth and mud, so the old floor is now buried beneath six feet of dirt, and what was once a high-ceiling gallery is now cramped. The outlaws keep some provisions here, and there's a fire pit near the stairwell. The remains of carvings can be seen on the walls, although it's hard to make out details without close examination. With time, it's possible to remove some of the filth and examine the carvings, which depict scenes from Gwendaith's long life.

9. THE CASKET OF GWENDAITH

The tomb of the Arnorian hero once stood on display here, but is now buried beneath the accumulated dirt of nearly three thousand years. Her body was preserved using the arts of the ancient Númenóreans, and her casket sealed so her remains are still intact.

An evil spirit from the Hill of Fear now inhabits those remains. This is a new Wight — not an old Barrow-wight from the days of Arthedain, but a fresh horror called up by the growing power of the Hill of Fear. For now, it's still sealed in the casket, but it's digging its way out. Scratch by scratch, inch by inch, it digs itself out of the grave to walk the night and bring despair to Mortals.

If the Wight is defeated and the grave excavated, a Lesser Hoard of grave-goods and ancient Arnorian treasures can be found beneath the casket.

LONG-DEAD GWENDAITH
Cunning, Vengeful

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 5

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
20	1	5	–	2

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Chilling Touch 2 (5/12, Seize)

FELL ABILITIES: *Denizen of the Dark*. All attack rolls are *Favoured* while in darkness.

Dreadful Spells. Spend 1 Hate to make one Player-hero gain 3 Shadow points (Sorcery). Targets who fail their Shadow test or who are Miserable fall unconscious and may be roused only with a SONG roll.

Hate Sunlight. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is exposed to the full light of the sun.

Deathless. Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound; spend 1 Hate to reset to full Endurance if reduced to 0 Endurance. Ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a Bane weapon (Undead).

Heartless. Unaffected by the Intimidate Foe combat action, unless a Magical success is obtained.

Thing of Terror. At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more creatures with this ability gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

FEARS IN THE NIGHT

The outlaws are afflicted by the same night-terrors and dark dreams as the folk of Farrell's House. They too dream of the Hill of Fear, and glimpse strange shapes moving in the dark — and, as if in answer, a scratching noise echoes from the cellar, like long nails scraping against a buried coffin lid…

Osmer — in his persona as "Gandalf" — tries to reassure his followers. *"Be not afraid, my good fellows. You've got a Wizard with you, and there's no shade or bogeyman that'll trouble the world while I'm around. It's just bad dreams brought on by too much cheese!"*

ATTACK ON FARRELL'S HOUSE

The next night, Osmer orders another attack on the tower of the evil Wizard Farrell. Two outlaws stay back to guard the tower, while the rest head up the hill. It's a cloudy night with little moonlight. If the dogs were successfully poisoned (see *Intruders!*, page 48), then the outlaws can sneak close enough under the cover of darkness, they attack and wound young Farweld and terrify the servants. The outlaws aren't trying to kill everyone in the House — Osmer wants Farrell to surrender and yield over the farmstead to him.

A BARGAIN WITH FARRELL THE YOUNGER

If the adventurers only barely repelled the attack last night, then Farrell the Younger travels to the watchtower in secret to strike a bargain with Osmer — if they spare the lives of everyone at the household, then he'll serve Osmer. Osmer agrees — on condition that Farrell the Younger gives up the troublesome adventurers. Farrell the Younger agrees. In this case, Hamfast becomes bait for the heroes: Osmer lets Hamfast go, and Farrell tells the adventurers where to find the boy, knowing the Wight will ambush them as they go in search of Hamfast.

THE WIGHT RISES

Also that night, while most of the outlaws are out attacking Farrell's farmstead, the Wight claws its way out of the grave in the cellar and kills one of the two guards who stayed to watch over the tower, and terrifies the other — he may be found shivering in a corner, talking about the 'ghost' that came out of the cellar. The corpse of the second guard is found on the floor of the cellar, arranged with his spear clasped in his hand like some fallen hero laid to rest. At the break of dawn, the Wight returns to its lair under the earth.

HAMFAST TRIES TO LEAVE

The next morning, a shaken Hamfast mutters that he wants to go back to his mother Lucinda. Osmer gives a speech, declaring that the boy has clearly fallen under the malign influence of Farrell. He has two of his loyal henchmen tie Hamfast up and imprisons him in the cellar for the day.

That afternoon, Osmer conceives a cruel plan. He has the idea of using Hamfast as bait to lure the Wight out of the cellar — and then up the hill to the House of Farrell. Osmer knows next to nothing about Wights, but he has heard tales of the Barrow-downs, and believes that Wights hunger for the blood of the living. So, he will give the monster all the blood it can drink.

THE THIRD ATTACK

In preparation for the third attack, Osmer sends all but two of his brigands off up the hill, ordering them to make ready to strike Farrell's house from the far side. As the sun sets, he descends into the cellar and cuts the bonds around Hamfast's feet so the boy can stand. He then cuts Hamfast's still-bound hand and squeezes his blood over the grave. The Wight wakes and rises from Gwendaith's grave.

Osmer and his henchmen then make the terrifying climb up the hill, with the Wight stalking them, sniffing the air and tasting the trail of blood.

Unless the Player-heroes intercede, then Osmer's grisly plan works — the Wight catches and kills Hamfast, but then turns on Farrell and his household. Farrell the Elder is slain, and most of the household tries to flee, but they run right into the arms of Osmer's other robbers and are forced to surrender. (Osmer abandons his plans to use the ruined watch-tower as a base for his banditry, but the House of Farrell works almost as well.)

PART 5: HOMEWARD BOUND

With Hamfast rescued, the Player-heroes can travel back to Bree and return him to his family. Lucinda offers no reward other than her lifelong gratitude. She confesses that she has been worried sick for all the time the Player-heroes have been gone. It is not that she thought they would be unable to find and rescue her son, but she's been having such strange, terrible dreams about a dark hill…

Optionally, if the characters capture some of the other bandits, they might bring them back too — some of them have prices on their heads (if one of these captured rogues is Jon-a-Leaping, that can lead right into the adventure *Not To Strike Without Need*).

CHAPTER 4

NOT TO STRIKE WITHOUT NEED

Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life.
Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death
in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends.

The land has no king.

Without a king, without law, Men must make their own justice, and all too often, it is made not with wisdom, but with brute force. In this adventure, the heroes are called upon to bring an outlaw to justice. When their prisoner claims to have secret knowledge and a higher purpose to his crimes, will the heroes listen?

The adventure begins with the Player-heroes escorting to Tharbad a captured criminal known by the name of Jon-a-Leaping. On the way, they discover that the criminal was also an agent employed by Orothel, a Ranger, forcing the heroes to choose between completing their original task or aiding her cause. Depending on how events in Tharbad unfold, the heroes may then aid Orothel in hunting an emissary of the Enemy.

There are several ways this adventure might play out, depending on the courage and cunning of the heroes.

The Outlaw and the Rangers

Some necessary backstory, for context: Tharbad (see *Ruins of the Lost Realm*), even in its present dilapidated state, is the crossroads of Southern Eriador. When strangers from the South or East travel to the North, they pass through the town. Some time ago, the Ranger Orothel (page 23) started to suspect that minions of the resurgent Shadow crossed the Misty Mountains to make mischief in the land, and that some trace of them might be found in Tharbad. However, Rangers are not welcome in Tharbad.

Now, the Rangers have a spy in that town — her name is Gwilleth, and she is one of Gurnow's scouts (see *Ruins of the Lost Realm*, page 16). She is closely watched by the other brigands and guards loyal to Gurnow, so Orothel forcibly recruited an agent who could move freely in and out of the watchful town — Orothel captured Jon-a-Leaping and put the fear of death in him, telling him that she would kill him if he did not serve her. For some months now, Jon has carried messages back and forth between Gwilleth and Orothel.

However, Jon's fear of being killed by Orothel or by Gurnow's men grew too great for him, and he tried to escape by returning to his old habits of thievery. He stole money from Gurnow's house and fled the town…

OTHER ROADS TO ADVENTURE

- Rangers might be sent to aid Orothel, and meet her outside Tharbad.
- Travellers who visit Tharbad might be contracted by Orothel herself.
- Instead of Borlas, have some friend of the Company get detained by the thieves of Tharbad; the characters must then hunt down the outlaw Jon-a-Leaping to trade for their friend's freedom.

PART 1: JON-A-LEAPING

This scene can be set in any small community or homestead that might plausibly have contact with Tharbad. Bree or Lond Daer work equally well.

The Player-heroes arrive to hear angry shouts and sounds of argument. A small crowd has gathered on the village green (or in the hall, or on the shores — wherever the people gather). The crowd are angry, and their wrath is aimed at a Man who might look tough and dangerous under other circumstances, but here he is clearly a prisoner. Dried blood from a head wound encrusts his face and hair. A leader of the community (for example, the Reeve of Bree, or Queen Nimue in Lond Daer) stands by the wounded Man, appealing for calm.

"He should be killed for what he's done!" Shouts someone in the crowd. *"He's one of them Rangers!"* Cries another. *"Justice!"* Shouts a third, and the crowd takes up the cry. *"We want justice!"*

The leader raises their hands again and calls for quiet. *"Please! If you take this wretch's head — and no doubt it is warranted — then what will become of our friend Borlas? Put aside your anger and think!"* The crowd seems unconvinced by these appeals for calm.

Seeing the Player-heroes, the leader seizes on them as a way to avoid an ugly confrontation. The leader takes the heroes aside and explains that the prisoner is a well-known outlaw, a thief and bandit named Jon-a-Leaping. In years past he preyed on the people of this area, jumping out of the hedgerow to waylay them on the road. He hasn't been seen in this part of the world in a few years, but people remember his crimes well. He was captured by good fortune — a girl gathering firewood found him sleeping, and summoned help before he woke.

Now, it's known (not least through Jon's own protests and threats) that Jon is a friend of Captain Gurnow, the ruler of Tharbad. And it happens that one of the people of this village, a shoemaker named Borlas, is languishing in the prisons of that town — Borlas did nothing wrong, insists the leader. He was charged an absurd fee for crossing the ford, just so Gurnow could stop him from leaving. No doubt Gurnow wants to force Borlas to stay in Tharbad, he collects talented craftsmen like a miser hoards coins.

The only way to free Borlas is to ransom him by exchanging him for Jon-a-Leaping. So, will the heroes bring Jon to Tharbad as their prisoner? The leader has little treasure, but can offer the gratitude of the community and the promise of fine new travelling boots when they bring Borlas home.

THE PRISONER

Jon-a-Leaping is sullen and uncooperative when handed into the heroes' custody. He is bound and gagged when first given to them; the Player-heroes must decide whether to unbind him or carry him all the way to Tharbad. If questioned, Jon claims innocence; he says that if he was ever an outlaw, it's all behind him now, and that any suggestion that he's quarrelled with Gurnow is nonsense! He's still fast friends with the Master of Tharbad, and anyone who harms Jon will face punishment — If the Players-heroes know what's good for them, they'll cut Jon's bonds and set him free right away!

Unless the Player-heroes are ready to believe Jon right away, a roll of **INSIGHT** suggests that the bandit is not half so confident as he seems — his demeanour serves only to hide that he is on the verge of panic.

Last but not least, a successful **SCAN** roll notices a concealed knife strapped to the inside of Jon's right shin pad (something that is also discovered if the Player-heroes search the bandit thoroughly).

PLAYING JON-A-LEAPING

A year ago, Jon-a-Leaping was exactly the sort of Man he seems at first glance — a cruel, uncouth bandit who cares only for his own interests, who sees himself as a wolf among sheep. Since then, however, Jon has discovered that while he may be a wolf, there are Wargs and Dragons in the world too — the Ranger Orothel terrified him so badly with threats and stories about the rising Shadow that she nearly broke him, and now he hides his fear under bluster and threats.

PART 2: JOURNEY TO THARBAD

All roads in the north lead to the Crossings of Tharbad; there is no better place to cross the rushing Greyflood. The travellers, therefore, can keep to frequently used paths if they choose — although that risks running into scouts or brigands loyal to Gurnow. Alternatively, they can strike out cross-country to avoid encountering others on the road.

Jon's demeanour changes as the characters draw closer to Tharbad. At first, he was full of threats and wild claims about how Gurnow will punish the adventurers. Now, he seems more fearful and nervous, although he won't willingly talk about what troubles him.

Should a Player-hero threaten him with a successful **AWE** roll, Jon admits that his bluster about his friendship with Gurnow was a lie. He stole from Gurnow in order to escape the oppressive regime in Tharbad (*"It's awful — everyone's watching everyone else, and plotting, and scheming. A man can't breathe there!"*). The captain does not tolerate betrayal, so if the characters bring Jon back to Tharbad, they are condemning him to death! And there's no guarantee that Gurnow will honour any bargains made and release Borlas if the characters do hand Jon over!

If a Player-hero establishes a friendly conversation with Jon with a successful **ENHEARTEN** roll, or if Jon suspects any of the Player-heroes to be a Ranger, then Jon claims that he's working for a Ranger. He does not know her name, but she forced him to carry messages in and out of Tharbad. If he saw a bonfire or a candle-flame in certain places, he'd know there was a letter there for him to fetch. Why, if the characters are also allied with the Rangers, then why not let him go? If the characters ask him to describe the Ranger, he describes her as a *"cruel old hag with a strange dagger"*. Any Ranger recognises Orothel from this description.

JON-A-SCAPING

If the characters are not vigilant (or as an event during the Journey), then Jon might slip his bonds and escape, or take one of the Company hostage with his hidden knife (if he still has it). If Jon does flee, then the characters can follow his trail with a **HUNTING** roll that leads them to the Watchful Stones.

MEETING OROTHEL

A three day's journey outside Tharbad (on whatever route the Player-heroes take) is a minor landmark called the Watchful Stones. It's a ring of thirteen standing stones on a low hill. Some tales claim they were Trolls caught while dancing in the open; others say that they were raised by nameless kings of

Men in the Dark Years. Those with **LORE** know, however, that the ring was made by the Elves of Hollin long ago, and that Elf-princes feasted under the stars in better times.

As the characters approach the stones, they see a campfire burning on the hilltop. Jon-a-Leaping is terrified by the sight — it's the signal that the Rangers want to meet him there. He alternates between begging that the heroes take him there, and despairing that all his fates are dire and they should bring him to Tharbad so he can throw himself at Gurnow's feet and beg for mercy.

(If the characters ignore the beacon fire and continue on, then Orothel follows them the next day, and confronts them on the road outside Tharbad.)

Waiting in the middle of the Watchful Stones is the ranger Orothel. She's angry that she's camped here for five nights without any response from Jon, and even angrier that he hasn't come alone. Her anger extends to the Player-heroes, unless any of them are Elves or fellow Rangers, or unless they already met her in another adventure.

Jon whimpers and refuses to look at Orothel while in her presence.

THE STORY OF OROTHEL

Angrily, Orothel tells her story and explains her involvement with Jon. She is a Ranger, a protector of travellers in the wild, and keeps watch for things of shadow. She captured that wretch Jon when he was an outlaw, and put him to better use as a messenger. But she hasn't heard anything from Jon in some months, and came here to make contact with him — this is one of their pre-arranged meeting places. She has a friend in Tharbad who likely has news for her — she needs Jon to return to the town and make contact with her friend.

Orothel becomes infuriated when she discovers that Jon has ruined his use as a courier by stealing from Gurnow, and grows angrier still as she learns that Jon fled Tharbad and returned to his old life as a brigand. She draws Dragontooth (her enchanted dagger) and threatens to end Jon on the spot. (Orothel is tired and burdened by Shadow, but not so far gone that she would murder the wretch — she might, however, scare him so badly that he goes a-leaping and a-yelping into the wild and is never seen again in this part of the world.)

Orothel is reluctant to discuss her ally in Tharbad; the ally's identity is known only to her, and not even Jon-a-Leaping knows who the Ranger spy is — they communicate through signs and signals, and Jon knows where to look to find written letters left by the spy. If any of the Player-heroes are Rangers of good repute, or if they've convinced Orothel of their worthiness, then Orothel reveals that the spy in Tharbad is none other than her own daughter Gwilleth, who has infiltrated Gurnow's household as one of his scouts.

Gwilleth's position is precarious, and she cannot afford to give herself away, hence the ruse of using wretched Jon-a-Leaping. If the Company offers to help Orothel and Gwilleth, she instructs them on how to contact her daughter in Tharbad (see *Part 5: The Ranger Spy*, on page 68).

WHERE TO NOW?

How do the Player-heroes proceed from here?

- The characters could hand Jon over to Orothel, and see if the brigand returns with the message. However, this does mean abandoning their original purpose of trading Jon for the imprisoned shoemaker Borlas — and it also means trusting Jon, who has already proven himself dishonourable.
- They could reject the Ranger's plea out of hand, and continue with their original plan of trading Jon for the shoemaker.
- The characters could agree to enter Tharbad themselves and make contact with the Ranger spy. Again, though, they must decide what to do with Jon — do they take the brigand to the rough justice of Gurnow, or leave him to Orothel, or have him serve as a guide to Tharbad?
- They could try rescuing Borlas themselves. The shoemaker is imprisoned in the dungeons of Garth Tauron, the mostly-abandoned castle in the heart of town.

CONFUSING KINDNESS AND BLINDNESS

If the characters choose to trust Jon, either as a guide or by sending him alone into Tharbad, then roll the Feat die to determine whether or not he betrays them. As a baseline, assume that Jon-a-Leaping stays true on a 8+, and all other results mean he betrays the heroes and Orothel to Gurnow. For every good deed or kindness the heroes showed Jon, add one to the roll.

- If Jon stays true, he returns to the Watchful Stones a few days later with a message from Gwilleth — skip onto *Part 6: The Hunt for Déor*.
- If Jon betrays the characters, then he claims that the Player-heroes and Orothel forced him to steal from Gurnow, and that they sent him back to steal more treasure from Tharbad. Gurnow dispatches some of his guards, commanded by his son Tharnow, to deal with the miscreants lurking in the Watchful Stones. (And to ensure the intruders don't escape, he sends his best tracker, Gwilleth, to lead the hunt...)

If this comes to pass, use the **Southerner Raider** statistics (*The One Ring*, page 146) for Tharnow's guards, while Tharnow himself counts as a **Southerner Champion**. Assume there are three guards per Player-hero, plus Tharnow. Clever heroes may sneak away rather than engage in a perilous battle.

ENTERING THARBAD

Tharbad is a rotten, soggy town. A generation ago, floods washed out the heart of Tharbad, and what's left shambles on, decaying ever faster now. There's an undeniable feeling of desperation in the town, a sense that no-one can be trusted and everyone's out to rob you. Only a fraction of the town's many ancient buildings are inhabited, but somehow the empty windows seem as watchful as the ones from which suspicious townsfolk glare at newcomers. Guards unsubtly direct new arrivals towards the Bridge Inn (*Ruins of the Lost Realm*, page 13) in the shadow of the fortress and the ruined bridge, and also draw their attention to the copies of the Rules posted everywhere.

If the characters have visited Tharbad before, they know their way around the town — and know that while Tharbad is unwelcoming and dangerous, it's not a bastion of the Enemy either.

However, if this is their first time in the town of thieves, then play up the paranoia. Tharbad is in the iron grip of a gang of cut-throats with a thin veneer of civility; scratch that surface, and they scratch back.

- If the characters openly have Jon-a-Leaping with them (as opposed to concealing his identity with a hooded cloak or other disguise), then the guards recognise the thief and demand that the characters proceed straight to Gurnow's court at the Red Palace.
- Otherwise, they still get invited to the Red Palace if they seem like dangerous armed adventurers, or if they ask to see Gurnow. The characters only get ignored if they seem like just a band of humble travellers, not worth the effort of robbing — and even then, they are still watched…

RESCUING BORLAS

Alas, poor Borlas. The shoemaker travelled to the market at Tharbad to buy fur and leather for his workshop and ran afoul of a 'rule' that one of the guards invented on the spot, demanding a tax on any furs carried across the ford. When Borlas could not pay, he was thrown in prison. He could obtain his freedom by agreeing to live in Tharbad — but that would be exchanging one prison for another, as he knows he'd be forced to dwell on the isolated Middle Island in the river, and his movement would still be dictated by Gurnow's guards.

So, for now, Borlas refuses to give in, and languishes in prison.

- There are two likely ways for the heroes to rescue Borlas; by convincing Gurnow to free the shoemaker (in *Part 3: An Audience with Gurnow*), or by breaking into the dungeon of Garth Tauron (see *Part 4: The Fortress of Garth Tauron*).

PART 3: AN AUDIENCE WITH GURNOW

The Master of Tharbad takes a keen interest in everyone who passes through his town — and an especially keen interest in bands of armed strangers — so he invites the Player-heroes to attend his court soon after they arrive. And if those armed strangers have brought a prisoner for trade, well now! That warrants a place at Gurnow's table at court!

Gurnow's court is a rough affair. His wife, the aristocratic Lady Stock, tries to maintain some decorum, but her husband's henchmen are mostly brigands and brutes, and it's a rare night in the Red Palace that passes without a knifing. Gurnow's court is described more fully in *Ruins of the Lost Realm*, page 14, but the key characters present include:

- **CAPTAIN GURNOW, MASTER OF THARBAD:** A former bandit chief who took over the town. Gurnow's a petty warlord. He's surprisingly insightful and cunning for someone who thrived on violence.
- **LADY STOCK:** Gurnow's wife and mother of his children. A Noblewoman of the town who clings to the dream of bringing back Tharbad's glory days when it was the last remnant of the old kingdoms. Lady Stock hates Rangers, believing them to be meddling troublemakers.
- **GURNOW'S LARGELY INTERCHANGEABLE SONS**, the eldest of whom is the brutal Tharnow.
- Lurking in the shadows are more henchmen, including the secret ranger Gwilleth and ambitious watch lieutenant Tom Brass, who's always on the look-out for ways to curry favour with the Master.
- Other members of the court include a collection of miserable artisans, scholars and assorted worthies that Gurnow has trapped in Tharbad by threatening their families or imposing upon them punitive fees for leaving the town.

JON'S FATE

The meeting with Gurnow plays out as a Council. Set the Resistance by determining what the Player-heroes want from the Master of Tharbad.

- A **reasonable** request (Resistance 3) might be: asking for a reward for bringing back Jon, convincing Gurnow that they are just ordinary travellers of little interest or importance.
- A **bold** request (Resistance 6) might be: buying Borlas' freedom in exchange for bringing back Jon.
- An **outrageous** request (Resistance 9) might be: asking that Gurnow forgive Jon, asking that Gurnow release Borlas for free.

Since the characters brought Jon-a-Leaping back to Gurnow, the attitude of the Captain of the Haven towards the Company is set at Open (no modifier to all rolls during Interaction).

If not convinced otherwise, Gurnow intends to publicly execute Jon — Tharbad is a city of law, and the most important law is "don't steal from the Master". If Jon is given over to Gurnow, then he has him thrown in prison and announces that he will be executed at dawn. (The traditional method of execution under Gurnow, by the by, is to be hung from the ruined bridge and lowered into the running waters of the Greyflood to drown.)

If the Player-heroes leave Jon to this fate, then he has nothing left to lose — Jon can buy mercy by revealing to Gurnow that there are Ranger spies operating under his nose. He cannot identify Gwilleth, but he can point to the Player-heroes and Orothel as "threats to Gurnow's rule". If the characters bargain for Jon to be spared, then he is better disposed towards them and may not betray them.

WATCHERS IN THARBAD

The thieves of Tharbad are always watchful for opportunities for profit. A traveller who passes through the town may pay a few pennies to cross the ford or stay in the Bridge Inn, but a traveller who trespasses in some way can be arrested and fined – and Gurnow rewards those who report trouble.

So, if a character badly fails a skill roll while in Tharbad, assume that the character has broken one of Tharbad's many laws and customs, and so the many watchers have a reason to detain that character if they get the opportunity. A lone 'criminal' is safe enough as long as they are with the rest of the Player-heroes, but if that character goes off on their own, they may be waylaid by ambitious rogues. (Use the **Footpad** statistics found on page 147 of *The One Ring*.) If most of the Company are troublemakers, then Gurnow's guards are dispatched to take them into custody (again, use **Footpad** statistics led by a **Ruffian Chief**).

If the characters are suspected of being Ranger spies, then they do not even need to break Gurnow's Rules to be arrested. Captured characters are thrown into the dungeons of Garth Tauron.

PART 4: THE FORTRESS OF GARTH TAURON

But now their havens became fortresses, holding wide coastlands in submission…

RUMOUR

Why, that's the king's castle. Which king? I don't rightly know. But it's all rotted inside, and less than a tenth is usable. Why, half those grand towers will come toppling down next time there's a storm. That's why the Master uses it as a prison — if the towers come down and squash a prisoner, then it saves on the cost of burying him.

OLD LORE

Garth Tauron — the Fortress of the Woods. Long ago, it is said there was a great forest from the mountains of Lune to the Gap of Rohan. Tree-hungry were the Mariners of Númenor, and they felled those woods for ship-building. They built mighty Garth Tauron here at the river-crossing to guard their foresters. An Age or more has passed since then, and the fortress endured — but here we are at the end of its days, and most likely the end of all things.

Background

Garth Tauron is an ancient fortress; the foundations of this place were laid in the Second Age. Many kings have passed by since then, and it seemed like every one of them was eager to add some tower or bastion or parapet to the castle — until the last king, and the castle is now slowly crumbling. Today, only portions of the sprawling castle are usable. In other parts, one unwary step could send an intruder crashing through a rotten floorboard, or topple some precarious tower, its foundations gnawed away by floodwaters.

Part of the fortress stands on a rocky outcrop by the riverbank, although later sections extend away from the waters to the north and west. The fortress has been many things in its long history — a watchtower, a military fortress, a counting house for tribute, and latterly a great palace, then a rotting one, and now at last a prison. The fortress walls are riddled with wounds and scars, and sagely locals insist that one particular breach in the walls was made by Sauron himself, in the War of the Elves and Sauron more than 4,000 years ago. (This is, of course, nonsense — while Garth Tauron was attacked in that ancient war, nothing of the fortress of that era survives, bar some deep-rooted foundations and a few stones. Most of the present fortress is of much newer construction, from either the last years of the Second Age or the first half of the Third). Of late, though, the fortress suffers much more from neglect and quarrying than the attacks of the Enemy. Half the houses in the north quarter of Tharbad use cut stone taken from the fortress walls and towers, and most of the decorative stonework in the 'new keep' was removed to the Master's Palace centuries ago.

Today, less than a tenth of the sprawling fortress is in use. Gurnow uses the place as his grand prison, incarcerating his enemies and debtors in rooms scattered throughout the landward portion of Garth Tauron. Some of the cells are dank pits that flood when the river is high; others are once-grand chambers where lords and kings formerly gathered.

Sneaking into Garth Tauron is not at all difficult — the fortress has many unguarded doors, and even more holes in the walls. The tricky parts of any rescue attempt is finding where in this massive hulk of rotting stone a particular prisoner is kept, navigating the few safe routes through the crumbling stonework, and avoiding the guards.

Locations

1. The Old Keep

The oldest part of the fortress. The old keep is on the brink of collapse in many places, and the upper levels are especially unstable. Gurnow's henchmen stay well away from the old keep — partly out of fear of the old ghosts that are said to haunt the fortress, but mainly because of the danger of falling masonry. Despite its decrepitude, the keep is still a magnificent structure — the largest work of the ancients between Annúminas and Isengard. Much of the keep's stone has been quarried, and a scaffolding supports the eastern wall. Smashing this scaffold could cause an extensive collapse.

2. The New Keep

Built in the failing days of the Kingdom, the New Keep was intended as a replacement when maintaining the rotting Old Keep proved too expensive. Now, the New Keep too is a rotting relic of elder days, but parts are still used by Gurnow as a garrison and gaol. Guards stationed here patrol the northern part of town, while troublemakers in the market or drunken oafs who disrupt Gurnow's court are thrown into cells here. Long-term prisoners (like Borlas, page 67) are kept in the dungeons of the Old Keep.

3. Five Towers

These towers, albeit similar in structure, were built at different times over the centuries, and each one reflects the skills and resources available to the builders at the time. The Arnorian-built towers are magnificent and steady; the ones built by the kings of Cardolan are still good, but look like a pale imitation of their elders; the sole tower built since the fall of the North-kingdom is best not talked about. Walkways and perilous rope bridges connect the towers.

4. Moat

An ancient canal, green with scum and weeds, protects the fortress. There are several culverts allowing boats to be rowed into underground chambers beneath Garth Tauron; these were used by smugglers in the past.

5. The Gibbet Walk

This path atop the River-gate was clearly visible from the old bridge, and can also be seen by any boats on the river or travellers heading to the town market. Therefore, Gurnow uses the walk for executions and the display of prisoners. Troublemakers may be dragged up here and put in stocks for the entertainment of the mob; enemies of Gurnow may be beheaded and their remains put on spikes.

6. The Quarry-yard

This wide courtyard is where stones taken from the fortress are stored and cleaned before being put to use. The masons of today can no longer cut stone as smoothly or as well as those of old, nor can the sculptors match the works of the ancients. The quarry-yard is always busy with sweating labourers by day; by night, it resembles a graveyard for giants.

7. THE GAOLER'S HOUSE

The position of gaoler of Garth Tauron is a sinecure, an easy job granted to henchmen and allies of Gurnow. The current gaoler is an arrogant fellow named Valandur, a cousin of Gurnow's highborn wife. The gaoler's house is a fine house, built of stone taken from the fortress. Previously, the gaoler was assigned rooms in the New Keep, but the roof there leaks ever since the floods of 2912.

Technically, the gaoler of Garth Tauron is also the master of the fortress — making Valandur the current holder of an office more than four thousand years old. No-one knows if the jewelled rod of office held by the gaoler is the original symbol of authority granted to the first master of Garth Tauron in the days of Númenor, but it is certainly hundreds of years old.

THE FORTRESS
OF GARTH TAURON

Valandur

Valandur belongs to one of the old families of Tharbad, who pride themselves on their descent from the Sea-kings of old. The blood of Númenor flows through these veins, declares Valandur, even though he has only the haziest idea what Númenor was. His appointment as Gaoler (although he becomes infuriated whenever anyone calls him a mere gaoler – he is Master of Garth Tauron, keeper of the fortress of the crossings) was a sop to those aristocratic families so they could continue to tolerate the presence of a bandit king as Captain. Valandur spends his days preening and trying to convince his slovenly guards to behave like Arnorian soldiers. He augments the small stipend that comes with the title of gaoler by taking bribes from prisoners and their families – a prisoner may not be released without the permission of Captain Gurnow, but a prisoner can be moved to more salubrious accommodation, or given better food, or permitted the liberty of the castle grounds.

OCCUPATION: Actually, a gaoler

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Greedy, Proud

8. THE DUNGEONS OF GARTH TAURON

The cellars and dungeons of the fortress are a labyrinth of tunnels, gnawing through the rocky foundations and off to the north and west, following subterranean streams and caverns. Water is a constant presence here, as the river floods the lowest chambers of the dungeons regularly. The low-ceilinged cells are also drowned in complete darkness, adding to the grim atmosphere of the place.

Captain Gurnow orders his men to throw the most dangerous prisoners to rot in the lowest dungeons, with only a lucky few finding their accommodation on the upper stories above the waterline (of course, the Captain decides whether a prisoner is more dangerous than another…).

9. BORLAS' CELL

Borlas' cell is in the lower dungeons. He has promised to make Valandur a fine pair of boots, in exchange for the gaoler moving him to a cell on the upper levels. Valandur has not moved the cobbler yet, but he has at least told the guards to make sure that Borlas does not catch a chill or drown. Therefore, if the river waters start to flood the lower cells, or if it starts to rain heavily, the guards move Borlas to one of the drier cells on the upper levels of the old keep.

Borlas

Poor Borlas the cobbler never meant to be caught up in the intrigues of bandit kings and spies, of Rangers and ancient spirits of fear. He is just an ordinary cobbler – a very good cobbler, to be fair. He attends to his shoe-making and leather-working with an almost Dwarven devotion to the craft, and strives to ignore the wider world except as it relates to boots.

Ironically, this is not the first time Borlas has been caught up in strange events. As a young shoe-maker's apprentice, he was employed to repair the very fancy walking boots of a Dwarf named Thorin Oakenshield, and while waiting for the boots to be finished, Thorin met by chance a wandering Wizard. On another occasion, he was employed to carve wooden shoes for a poor maimed Hobbit. And why, just as soon as he gets out of this prison cell, he has a curious commission to fulfil in Bree, for some eccentric fellow who wants a pair of bright yellow boots.

While happy to be rescued, Borlas gives a running litany of complaints about the state of whatever footwear the Player-heroes provide him with. Borlas is regrettably slow and clumsy; if the characters have to flee or sneak with him in tow, their rolls *lose (1d)*.

OCCUPATION: Cobbler

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Meek, Meticulous

10. TREASURE-ROOM

This secret vault is hidden deep in the dungeons, in a chamber that is almost always flooded except in days of drought. Hidden in the mud is a sealed chest. It is Gurnow's secret trove; if events in Tharbad ever turn against him and all his better-known hoards are taken from him, he will drag this chest out of the mud and flee town. The chest contains a Lesser Hoard.

Schemes and Troubles

RESCUING A PRISONER

The dungeons of Garth Tauron are not especially secure. There are a dozen ways to move unseen through the old ruin with **STEALTH**, and the only significant obstacles are the recently repaired and sturdy doors (**CRAFT** or **ATHLETICS** to force open) — and, of course, the sentries. However, the sheer size of the fortress does make it hard to find the right prison cell. There are hundreds of rooms in the fortress that might be used as cells, and they are scattered over the whole Old Keep and its extensive cellars. Would-be rescuers must **EXPLORE** the ruin to find their quarry, or observe guards with **HUNTING** and watch their movements when they bring food to the prisoners.

Borlas is held in the lower sections of the dungeon, but is moved to a higher cell if it rains. This may be advantageous to the heroes (no need to break into the cell — just ambush the guards as they escort Borlas) or a regrettable complication (Borlas' cell is empty — he has been moved elsewhere! And now this cell is flooding!)

In addition to Borlas, the gaol currently houses a dozen prisoners. Most are just citizens of Tharbad who have crossed Gurnow in some fashion, but there might be travellers from afar or suspicious strangers of interest to the heroes.

RAISING THE ALARM

Gurnow's guards are often drunk and not especially watchful. (Yet again, use **Footpad** statistics). However, if they discover that a prisoner has escaped, they rouse the townsfolk by blowing loudly on horns — and every rogue in Tharbad is eager to recapture an escaped prisoner.

Valandur himself and his most trusted guards are more of a threat (again use the **Southerner Raider** statistics (*The One Ring*, page 146) for the guards, while Valandur himself counts as a **Southerner Champion**).

GHOSTS OF GARTH TAURON

It is said that Garth Tauron has a hundred ghosts, but three are of particular note.

First, there is the Owl, a curious entity that lives among the crumbling rooftops of the fortress. The guards believe it to be a vampiric ghost; in truth, it is a prisoner who was driven to madness during her long incarceration in the lower dungeons, and though she escaped her cell in a storm, she dares not leave. She has forgotten human speech, and scavenges from the castle and the streets nearby to survive. She also descends to the river to fish on moonlit nights.

Second, there is the Singing Stone of Eregion. This was a gift from the Noldorin Elves of Eregion to the ancient lord of Tharbad, and was stored and forgotten in the cellars of Garth Tauron centuries ago. The stone holds the echoes of ancient Elven singers who passed away West long ago, and when starlight touches it through an air shaft, it awakens and sings. The singing stone is believed to be the ghost of an Elf-maiden by the superstitious guards.

The third ghost is a genuine horror — many years ago, or so the tale goes, a slimy creature once crawled from the Ghost Pit (*Ruins of the Lost Realm*, page 11) and took refuge from the sunlight in the dungeons of the fortress. Prisoners are warned that if they try to escape, "the thing in the dark" will eat them.

Part 5: The Ranger Spy

Orothel tells the Player-heroes that her agent in Tharbad leaves messages by means of candles. There are many empty buildings in the town; if the agent (Gwilleth) leaves a candle burning in the window of a ruined house by night, then she has hidden a letter in that ruin for Jon (or another courier) to collect.

The superstitious folk of Tharbad believe that these eerie lights signify the presence of ghosts, and stay away from them. And they are wise to do so — Tharbad was besieged by the forces of the Enemy long ago, and the town's spirit is still scarred. Strange things move in Tharbad by night...

Finding the Letter

If the Company is looking for the Ranger spy, A **SCAN** roll is required to spot the candle at night; the characters can try again on subsequent nights. (If Jon-a-Leaping is with them, then there is no need to roll, as he knows just where to look.) The longer the characters linger, the more likely circumstances will turn against them and they'll have to flee Gurnow's minions. Note that there's a curfew in Tharbad, so it's forbidden for anyone to be out after dark without permission from the Master.

Gwilleth has been waiting for weeks to get a message out, so a delay of another day or so is not a grave concern. Once the characters identify the deserted house on the south side of the river, they need to sneak there to recover the letter. Gwilleth concealed her letter inside an old chimney. The letter is obviously unsigned (it is a poor spy who signs their secret messages with their own name…), and was clearly written in haste.

The letter describes a suspicious traveller from the south named Déor, who claimed to be a Man of Rohan. The spy calls for the other Rangers to watch this stranger. The letter is dated a month ago.

Brethren,

Of note: a traveller on the Road named Déor, a stranger to these lands, who claimed to hail from Rohan. He arrived in Tharbad with only scanty belongings, travelling on foot, and stayed at the Road-house. He spoke little, but I marked that he listened closely. After a week in town, he departed up the river Glanduin, and returned a month later, much the worse for wear, and complaining muchly of the marshes at Swanfleet.

I saw him again in the company of some Dwarves, and they departed together, following the valley of the river into Eregion. The Dwarves returned without Déor, and they seemed to me to be burdened with great sorrow. The Dwarves set off north along the Road. One was named Flonar; I do not know the name of his companion.

Now, Déor returned alone some days later, burdened by a heavy sack. He spoke long with Captain Gurnow and Lady Stock; about what, I cannot say. Déor bought a boat and set off north along the Greyflood, and I noted that his boat sat very low in the water.

It may be that Déor and the Dwarves found treasure in the mountains, and nothing more. But I thought it strange they did not return together, and what business he has in the Lone-lands, I cannot guess.

RETURN TO OROTHEL

Orothel the Ranger waits at the Watchful Stones (although if the Player-heroes need rescuing, she could enter the town to aid their escape). When they return with the letter from her spy, she snatches it from them and reads it swiftly, then gives it to the Player-heroes to read before burning it.

"An odd tale — but she would not have sent this message unless she thought it important. Curse that wretch Jon! If he had not strayed from his task, I would have had this information four weeks ago! Now this Déor is far gone into lands where even a Ranger would be hard-pressed to find the trail — but I must try. Several hunters may have better luck than one alone — will you help me?"

If the Player-heroes agree, the hunt for Déor begins. (Should they refuse, perhaps preferring to bring Borlas back home, then Orothel goes alone. See Orothel's Fate, page 71).

DÉOR'S MISSION

Gwilleth was right to be suspicious — Déor was a spy from Mordor.

Sauron does not fear the Men of Eriador, for he broke their strength long ago, when he defeated Arnor and its successor kingdoms. All that remains are a few scattered settlements of little import. But even an irrelevant farmer or inn-keeper in Bree might know something useful, and the Wild Men who dwell in the mountains of Angmar might be recruited as fodder for the wars — Déor's task was to use gold to corrupt the spirits of the people of Eriador.

But he doomed himself through carelessness.

Déor was supposed to meet with Orcs from Mordor in the hills near Moria. Long ago, the Orcs looted the treasuries of the Dwarves — it was intended that Déor would take a portion of this stolen gold and put it to use in the service of the Enemy. However, while Déor was able to follow the Road up from the Gap of Rohan and thence into the north, he stumbled when he left the path: the marshes of Swanfleet defeated him, and he had to return to Tharbad.

In Tharbad, he met some Dwarves who were heading up into the mountains of Moria on their own quest, and he accompanied them. In doing so, he doomed both himself and the Dwarves, for the Mordor Orcs are under orders to hide their presence at all costs. At first, it seemed as though all went well — Déor parted company with the Dwarves and climbed up the Redhorn Pass, where he met the Orcs he sought and was given a sack of gold. He returned to Tharbad and met with Gurnow, giving him some gold as a gift — and the promise of more, in days to come.

It was only later that the Orcs discovered that Déor had brought foes to their very doorstep — and worse, these Dwarves knew a secret way into Moria! If the Dwarves continued to poke around, they might discover the presence of the Mordor Orcs in the north. Infuriated, and fearful that Déor might reveal their presence to more enemies like the hated Elves, they hunted him down and murdered him, and set a trap for anyone who might come after him. (They arranged too for the destruction of the Dwarves, as will be described in *Wonder of the Northern World*, page 73.)

PART 6: THE HUNT FOR DÉOR

Hoping to avoid watchers on the North-South Road, and burdened by his sack of treasure, Déor took a small boat out of Tharbad, laboriously rowing against the current. The Greyflood is a slow and lazy river for some of its length, but as it approaches the confluence with the Hoarwell, it runs swifter. Any character with knowledge of the region can guess that Déor would abandon his boat at some point south of the Angle.

Indeed, in the shadow of a wooded area, the Company finds Déor's boat drawn up and hidden in the underbrush. The lands around the Angle are Ranger-country, and if Déor has not been spotted by any of Orothel's kinfolk, then he must have turned aside.

The Loremaster should now call for a roll of **HUNTING**. Pass or fail, the Player-heroes discover signs that a traveller struck out north-east, following the fast-flowing Loudwater through the wild and trackless foothills of the mountains. If they succeed, however, they also find traces of Orcs following the same path. They are not the only people hunting Déor.

THE AMBUSH

After a few days' journey, the characters spot something fluttering on a hilltop, like a black flag. Approaching, they discover that it is a cloak, pinned to the ground with a broken spear. Lying there is the corpse of Déor. He's been dead for some days; flies and maggots infest his rotting flesh.

When anyone touches the corpse of Déor, the corpse's eyes flicker open and its dead hand flashes out to grab hold of the nearest Player-hero, clutching with an iron grip.

> The horror of seeing a dead body awaken is worth 2 points of Shadow (Dread); for the grabbed character, it is a 3 points gain.

As the dead Déor holds on, his lips move soundlessly, and dark clouds suddenly gather over the hillside. Keen-eared characters hear wailing on the wind — the same wailing they heard on the Isle of the Mother. Spirits are abroad, called from the dark place under the Hill of Fear to trouble the waking world once more. This time, the spirits do not conjure a storm, but weave a cloud so thick and dark it blocks out the sun, plunging the hills into deep shadow.

Then, as suddenly as it came to life, Déor's body returns to its deathly stiffness, as Orcs emerge howling in counterpoint to the spirits in the air. They crawl out of gullies and cave-mouths, and come loping down from the heights. Some of them circle around the base of the hill, aiming to cut off any line of retreat; others swarm up the slope to attack the heroes. All these are mountain Orcs, Goblins from the Misty Mountains. *"Don't let them escape"*, cries one in Orkish, *"Kill the Elf-lickers and the Tarks before they give us away!"*

BATTLING THE ORCS

The Orc-host consists of a mix of **Goblin Archers** and **Orc Soldiers** — assume 2 Archers and 1 Soldier per hero, plus an **Orc-chieftain** in command. They all suffer from the *Hate Sunlight* drawback, but the unnatural cloud cover overhead protects them.

> A Magical success on an Intimidate Foe attempt using the sword Estelang could banish the spirits and break the clouds; Player-heroes might accomplish a similar feat using a fiery arrow or another magical item.

If Orothel is present, she strings her bow and looses a hail of arrows at the Orcs, targeting the ones attempting to encircle the base of the hill; Player-heroes *gain (1d)* on all attack rolls, and any attempt to withdraw from combat is Favoured.

AFTER THE BATTLE

Once the Orcs are defeated, the heroes may search the hillside and the surrounding area. Examining Déor's body and the traces left on the hilltop suggest he was captured by the Orcs and questioned before he was killed — there are still the marks left by ropes around his wrists, and his throat was cut with a single knife-wound suggesting an execution, not a struggle. There's no sign of his belongings on the hillside, and it's clear that his corpse was left out in the open as a lure.

In a shallow cave nearby, the Player-heroes find the remnants of the Orc-camp. The Orcs have not been here long, for the cave is not fortified and does not have the Orc-stink about it. The Orcs have travelling-gear and some little supplies, but not much; at a guess, they left their lair in haste, stalked Déor along the river, and ambushed him when they had the opportunity. Why the Orcs then waited in ambush is not obvious, unless they expected someone to come looking for Déor.

Should the characters capture and question any of the Orcs, they gain little for their efforts except threats and disturbing hints. These are Moria-Orcs, and know little of the outside world. The prisoner says that *"Dwarves have come sniffing around our mountain, Azog's place, and they came with Déor. There's no trespassing in Azog's Place, that's the rule."*

- The Orcs say that Snava *"is one of the Orc-bosses. A strange one. Up from the fire, I'll wager. Snava will sort those trespassing Dwarves out. Snava's got power. He's got friends. And he's gone north to sort this matter out."*
- If any of the heroes have dreamed of the Hill of Fear, the Orc prisoner senses this and snarls *"You've seen it, ain't you? I can smell the stink of it on you. All your fear is coming, and worse! Run west as far and as fast as you can if you want to live, because one night soon, everywhere west of the mountains will be ours."*

Searching the Orc-camp, the characters find a heavy sack (near the corpses of two Orcs who were knifed by their comrades in a squabble over the contents). Inside are gold and silver coins comprising a Lesser Hoard. Curiously, all the coins and treasures are of ancient Dwarven make, and the coins bear the likeness of Durin V — these are coins from Moria.

At the top of the sack are some possessions of Déor that were thrown in there by the Orcs — a comb, some pots and pans, and other travelling gear. Notably, there's a leather pouch containing two items.

- The first is a small iron talisman, bearing the image of the Lidless Eye on one side and a mouth on the other. This is a sorcerous instrument, wound with spells that count as Blessings of **COURTESY** and **PERSUADE**; using it counts as a Misdeed (incurring a gain of 1 or 2 Shadow points, depending on the circumstances). This talisman was forged in Mordor, and entrusted to Déor to aid in his mission.
- The second is an amulet made of some sort of strange shell. This talisman has no magical properties, but it is made from the carapace of the fabled Fastitocalon — the island-beast of the northern seas.

Part 7: Homeward Bound

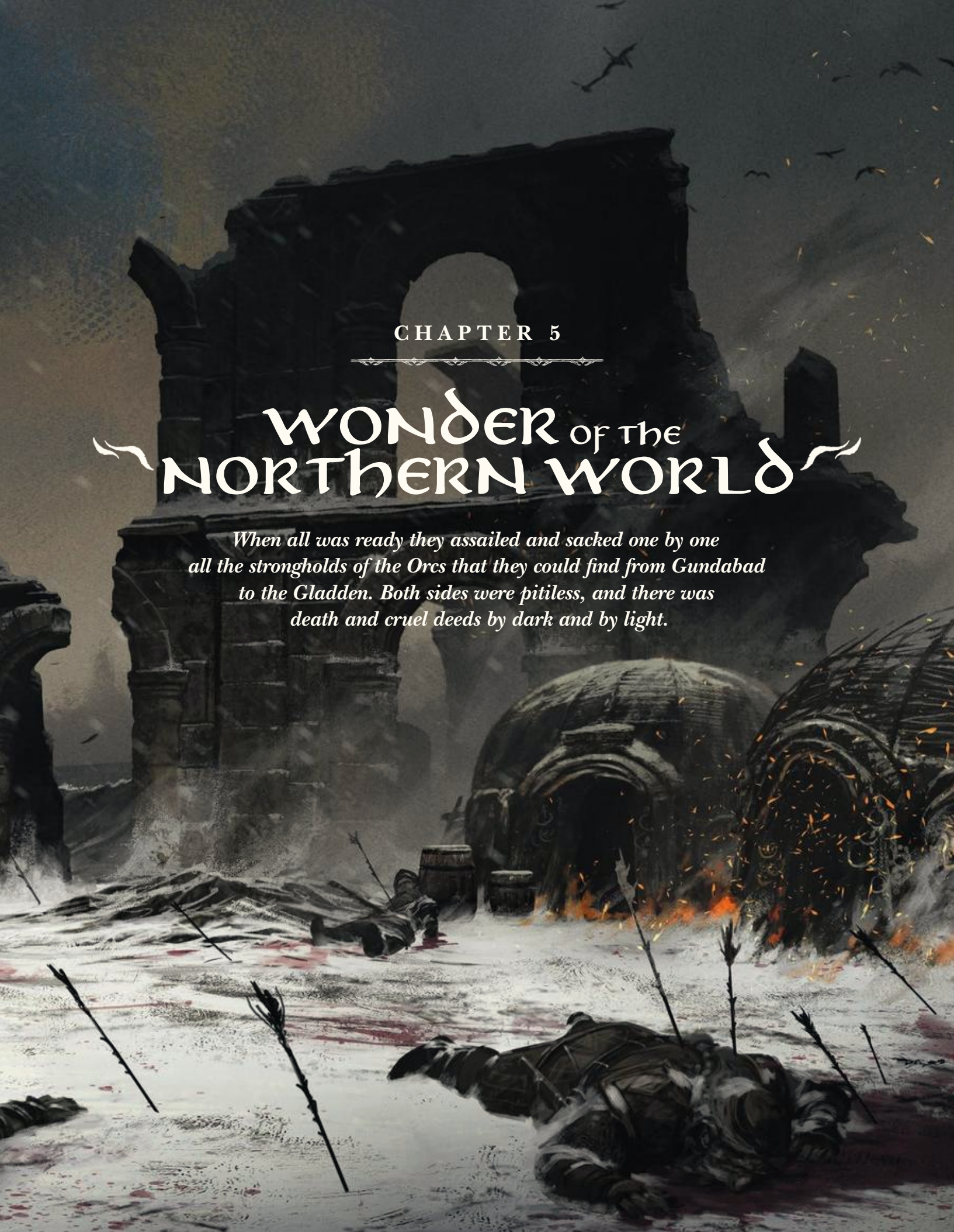
The mysterious Déor is dead, and the Orcs who murdered him are dead too. What Déor's task was, why he was slain, and what connection he has to the Hill of Fear is a mystery. Orothel vows to seek out these answers.

- One possible clue — the shell amulet. With the Fellowship-phase Undertaking *Study Magical Items*, the characters can identify it as an amulet made by the Snowmen of Lossoth. It signifies friendship — or allegiance, and a historian can warn that the Lossoth were forced to serve the Witch-king of Angmar out of fear in days of old.
- A second clue — the Dwarves who travelled into the hills with Déor. What did they see? Where did they go?

OROTHEL'S FATE

What becomes of Orothel the Ranger? Defeating the Hill of Fear is a task for the Player-heroes, not her, so she must step back from the tale. Some options:

- Orothel may be wounded in The Siege of Rath Sereg (page 88) and be unable to continue on with The Quest of Amon Guruthos (page 91).
- She might retire to the Ranger-haven east of Rivendell, and pass on the burden of defending Eriador to the Player-heroes.
- The heroes might discover her shallow grave while travelling in the North; she successfully tracked the Orc Snava, but was defeated by him. A cruel Loremaster might even have Snava set the same trap as used at Déor's body.



CHAPTER 5

WONDER OF THE NORTHERN WORLD

When all was ready they assailed and sacked one by one all the strongholds of the Orcs that they could find from Gundabad to the Gladden. Both sides were pitiless, and there was death and cruel deeds by dark and by light.

The wounds of the war of the Dwarves and Orcs are still raw and bloody. Two hundred years ago, the Orcs of Moria unjustly slew Thrór, who had been King Under The Mountain. In response, the seven Houses of the Dwarves gathered together to exact vengeance in the name of Durin's heir, and for six years they waged bloody war in the dark places under the mountains. From Gundabad to the eaves of Fangorn, from the Blue Mountains to the Iron Hills, the cry resounded: BARUK KHAZÂD! KHAZÂD AI-MÊNU!

But, as the power of Mordor has grown, the Orcs have returned to their lairs and fortresses in the Misty Mountains and in the ill-omened reaches of Mirkwood. And they have not forgotten the injuries dealt to them by the Dwarves…

PART 1: FLOKI'S ERRAND

The opening scene of this adventure involves a request for the Player-heroes to carry a message to a Dwarven settlement. The request comes from a Dwarf named Floki, who the heroes likely met during *A Troll-hole, if Ever There Was One*. If they failed to meet him there, or if the group didn't participate in that adventure, then the Loremaster should consider introducing Floki before starting this scenario as an acquaintance or relative of one of the heroes.

The Player-heroes might meet him while travelling on the Road or at the Prancing Pony; or perhaps he comes to their aid in a fight, for Floki is not slow to wield his axe in battle. In any case, Floki treats the Player-heroes as old friends, bellowing that they should come and visit him in his hall in the Blue Mountains, where they will feast like kings. Like kings!

There's just one task Floki would ask of them first. He has a brother, Flonar, who dwells in the Hills of Evendim in a small Dwarf-hold with a handful of followers. Floki has a message for Flonar, and asks the Player-heroes to deliver it. He asks that they do it out of friendship, but if they quibble, he shall pay them in gold. (They shall get the gold regardless, but Floki would prefer to give a kingly gift to a friend than pay a hired servant according to contract).

NO CLEAR PATH

There is no 'correct' way to traverse this story. In some scenarios, there's a clear goal for the Player-heroes – they're trying to find the treasure, or slay the dragon, or destroy the One Ring. In others, like this one, it's up to the Player-heroes to react to the circumstances and find a path forward that they can accept. Maybe the heroes will go on a reckless chase to rescue the Dwarven prisoners. Maybe they'll methodically build support for Floki's quest for vengeance, and help raise an army out of the Blue Mountains. Maybe they'll reject Floki's plea and counsel him to mourn his brother in other ways, or even decide that the brother was a criminal who brought ruin on himself and his followers.

Only circumstances and challenges are described here – it is for the Player-heroes to decide what to do with them.

Floki

Floki is a minor Dwarven noble, a distant cousin of Thorin Oakenshield, although his elder brother Flonar is the head of their branch of the family. Floki's defining trait is his sheer enthusiasm; he throws himself into any problem or challenge with full force. He enjoys travelling more than other Dwarves, and so is often found on the Road between the Blue Mountains and distant Erebor.

Presently, although Floki dwells in the Blue Mountains, like many Dwarves in this age of the world, he often talks loudly of the fabulous wealth of Erebor and how he might one day go there to seek his fortune.

OCCUPATION: Messenger

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Eager, Proud

The Shadow of the Past

Suspicious or insightful heroes may wonder why Floki does not deliver this message himself, or may even have heard of the disgrace of Floki's brother Flonar. This matter is discussed in *Part 4: Council Under The Mountains*, but in brief: it is forbidden to enter Moria or take relics from there, and Flonar spoke against this prohibition. For this disobedience, he was shunned by many, and so he chose to set off into the Lonelands. Floki's face flushes and his beard bristles with anger when he speaks of the injustice done to his brother, but the fact remains that Floki must be circumspect when communicating with Flonar to avoid sharing in his disgrace.

The Letter

Floki gives the characters a letter for his brother, as well as a few silver pennies for travelling expenses. His brother's hall, he says, lies north-west of Lake Evendim, far from the habitations of any other living soul. There are tales that the ruins around the Lake are haunted, and he warns the adventurers to stay away from ghosts and wights.

Floki's letter is sealed with wax. If the characters open it, they find that it is written in the Common Tongue and discusses Floki's efforts to quietly plead Flonar's case to the Dwarven leaders, and asks Flonar for more money so that Floki may hire advocates, scribes and lawyers. There is nothing especially strange or suspicious about the letter (opening a sealed letter is a minor Misdeed worth 1 Shadow Point).

BY ANOTHER ROAD

Alternatively, if your Player-heroes happen to be adventuring in the hills around Lake Evendim on some other quest, they might come upon the disaster of the Vale of Gold by chance, and be drawn into the adventure that way. They find the bodies of the slaughtered Dwarves, and discover Floki's letter to his brother among Flonar's possessions, giving them the clue that leads to Part 4: Council Under The Mountains.

PART 2: THE VALE OF GOLD

After a long journey, the Company discovers a fresh trail that leads up into the hills, west of the lake, and then along an old road that runs arrow-straight towards the west, cleaving through the hills as if carved by a great sword-stroke. Once it was wide and paved with great flagstones, a ceremonial road for the Sea-kings. Statues and monuments to vanished Númenor and heroes of old lined the path, but now there is naught but shattered stone beneath the grass. What the defilement of Orcs could not accomplish, the lone centuries have managed.

And along that old straight track, the Company sees smoke rising. Wisps of black smoke, wraith-smoke, the lingering ghost of a great conflagration.

FLONAR'S HALL

Following the smoke leads to the Vale of Gold where Flonar and his followers settled. It was named for the blazing golden gorse bushes that cover the slopes, but they are all ash now — as are most of the houses and pens built by the Dwarves.

What lies in front of the heroes is a scene of devastation and chaos — the buildings have been burnt down, and the corpses of a dozen Dwarves lie scattered and dismembered across the hillside. Great black crows peck and tear at their spilled guts, cawing and spitting as the Player-heroes draw near. Notably, all of the Dwarves have had their right hand hacked off, leaving only bloody stumps. The hands themselves are missing. There are a few Orc-carcasses too, left where they fell by their comrades, although they have been stripped of any useful gear.

A multitude of Orc footprints mar the churned-up ground, dozens of Orc-arrows lie embedded in the corpses — there can be no doubt that a large Orc-host was responsible for this attack.

The Dwarven settlement was quite small. There are a few little houses made of river-mud, branches and piled stones, and a few ancient cellars that have been partially excavated and repaired. The Dwarves had not dwelt here for long, and were in the process of building better homes for themselves. Flonar and his followers only settled here two years ago, after his exile. At a guess, there were at least three dozen Dwarves living here — but counting the bodies, there are only twenty or so Dwarven corpses, suggesting that some were taken as prisoners by the Orcs.

FLONAR'S BODY

The remains of the chieftain of the Vale of Gold are tied to one of the ancient statues that dot the landscape around Lake Evendim. It is clear that he was tortured before he died; his body bears many wounds and fresh brands, suggesting he was tormented with heated weapons. His beard has been shorn, his eyes torn out and thrown to the crows, and someone tried to cut his head from his shoulders judging by the gory ruin of his neck. A notched axe bears testament to the stiffness of Dwarven neck-bones. Even in death, though, he remains a mighty Dwarf, tall for his kind, and battle-strong. He bears a clear resemblance to his younger brother Floki. The corpses of a dozen Orcs lie nearby, hacked apart by Flonar's axe.

Examining the Dwarf's body, the characters find something curious — around his neck is a chain of silvery metal, held closed by a clasp of cunning make. Hanging from the chain is a scrap of iron, suggesting that an iron object was once attached to it, but was recently hacked off when the Orcs could not open the chain — and little wonder! The chain is forged of Mithril, and cannot be opened without the secret of the clasp or a suitable magical success. Clearly, Flonar had some treasured item hung on the chain, and would not yield it over to the Orcs no matter how they tormented him. They tortured him, they tried to cut the chain, they tried to saw off his head, and in the end they just tore away the iron object, suggesting they were in great haste.

(If this is the first scene of the adventure, then there's also a letter in Flonar's pocket. Scrape away the blood, and it can be read. It is a letter from his brother Floki.)

THE GOBLINS

The Loremaster calls for an **AWARENESS** roll as the characters search the site. If successful, the Player-heroes hear the yelping and cruel jests of Goblins close at hand, and can sneak up on the foul creatures. If the heroes fail, then the Goblins are not taken by surprise, and have time to grab their weapons.

These Goblins are stragglers that got separated from the host that sacked the Vale of Gold. They lingered here to loot the ruins, and were caught by the rising sun. They took shelter in a cellar, and are whiling away the daylight hours digging for hidden treasure.

- There are three **Goblin Archers** for each Player-hero in the Company.
- The Goblins' shields and helms are marked with a symbol — the mark of a two-headed Troll. A hero with **ENEMY-LORE** (Orcs) knows that this is the symbol of a Goblin-band that dwells in the Ettenmoors, far to the east of the Vale of Gold, a tribe led by an Orc named Hultmar Manyhanded.

THE SPIES OF SAURON

The War is coming. All across the East, the thralls and servants of Sauron the Terrible labour in preparation for the final assault. Ever since Sauron returned to Barad-dûr and declared his presence in Mordor once again, the War has been inevitable. The first stroke must fall on Gondor, on the sevenfold walls of Minas Tirith and the crossings of Osgiliath, but the defenders there are but mortals, and few mortals have ever troubled Sauron's thought. No, ever the Eye probes for those few he fears have the power to defy him. The Istari sent from the West, and the remaining Elf-lords, the bearers of the Three – these, Sauron believes, are the only forces left that might contest his dominion of Middle-earth.

A key element of Sauron's plan, therefore, is the assault on the remaining Elven strongholds. He intends to encircle Lothlórien, striking at the Golden Wood from east and west at once. He has sent his Nazgûl to reclaim his old fortress in Dol Guldur to prepare the assault from the east; from the west, he intends to send the Goblin-rabble of the Misty Mountains, and for that he needs to command the strongholds of the mountains; Mount Gram, Mount Gundabad, Goblin-town – and, nearest and greatest, Moria!

With Moria, he can command the Dimrill Stair and the other passes of the mountains, and cut Rivendell and the Grey Havens off from Wilderland. And should his other spies find the hidden valley, then from Moria he can send forth a host to despoil the Last Homely House.

Sauron has dispatched spies and agents to Moria, to sway the Orcs who dwell there. Their mission must be one of utmost secrecy – Sauron knows that there are hunters and heroes in Elrond's household that might thwart his schemes if they learn of them too soon. At this stage in his preparations, he must be like a great spider, patiently spinning a web to invisibly enmesh his enemies, so that they do not realise they are trapped until it is too late for a bright sword to cut them free. His spies must stay hidden.

Now, the Dwarf Flonar and one of his companions secretly visited Moria, in defiance of the command of King Dáin, who long ago warned that no Dwarf would walk in Moria while Durin's Bane yet waited for them there. Dáin made this prophecy as a stripling warrior at the Battle of Dimrill Dale, but now that he is King Under The Mountain, it has the force of a royal command, and woe betide anyone who breaks it. Flonar and his companion sought to enter Moria by a secret path that he thought was known only to the Dwarves and thus avoid the watchers at the Gates. He learned from the thief Jari the Wanderer that the archives in the Blue Mountains contained the key to this secret door, and stole it.

Alas! This secret way was known to Thorin's father Thráin, and he yielded it up in the dungeons of Dol Guldur after many torments. The door was the very one used by Sauron's agents when they crept into Moria, and when Flonar and his companions used the hidden door, they caused great alarm among those spies of Mordor.

All this long tale is a prologue: fearing discovery, one of Sauron's spies spied on Flonar's company, following them back north to the Vale of Gold. The spy – another Orc, by the name of Snava, (see page 101) – then recruited Hultmar Manyhanded to destroy the Dwarves of the Vale of Gold, and thus ensure the secrecy of Sauron's emissaries in Moria...

Reading the Riddle

So — a large band of Orcs crossed hundreds of leagues of the Lone-lands to attack an isolated and obscure Dwarven settlement. The Orcs are only a day or two ahead of the heroes, but are likely marching east with great haste. It's also likely that the Orcs have taken some Dwarves prisoner — but it's certain that the Orcs heavily outnumber the heroes.

The heroes could pursue them — or they could return to Floki and the Blue Mountains, and learn more of Flonar and what might have been taken from him….

PART 3: CHASING THE ORCS

The evidence found among the ruins of the Dwarven settlement indicates that there was clearly a great host of Orcs at the Vale of Gold, and that the Company would end up like the Warg that caught the Oliphaunt if they succeed in overtaking their quarry. They can still pursue if they wish, and maybe rescue any prisoners taken by the Orcs through stealth rather than force of arms — but it is their decision whether or not to pursue immediately.

If the Player-heroes are bound on this course, then they can follow the Orc-trail.

THE ORC-HOST

The warband that sacked the Vale of Gold is led by a dreadful Orc-captain of the north by the name of Hultmar, known among his kind as the Manyhanded, for it is his custom to take the sword-hand of anyone who defies him, Man or Orc. Worse, it's whispered that he possesses some vile sorcery learned in the secret clefts of Angmar or Dol Guldur, and that he can breathe life and motion into his collection of rotten hands, so that they crawl like spiders around his lair and strangle the life from his foes. When he was inspired to attack the Vale of Gold, he gathered his best Orcs and set off from his stronghold in the Ettenmoors, the place called *Rath Sereg*, the Fort of Blood.

His host consists of some fifty fighting Orcs, and they are accompanied by lesser Goblins who came chiefly for plunder, not fighting. The Orcs travel only by night, though the gloomy clouds of northern Eriador admit little sunlight, and so they can march long at dusk. By day, they hide in whatever hole or sheltered glen they can find — Hultmar is well-travelled, and knows the best places to hide from the sun. (Unlike Trolls, the touch of the sun does not harm Orcs, though they do find it unpleasant; if the Orcs are caught in the open, they can just hurl themselves to the ground and bury their faces in the mud until the searing light passes.)

THE PRISONERS

In addition to what little gold and iron they took from the Vale of Gold, the Orcs also took nine Dwarves as prisoners. These unfortunates have had their hands bound and ropes tied to their beards or necks, to drag them along when the Orcs run. Dwarves are not as swift as Orcs, and Hultmar has given orders that any Dwarf who cannot keep up is to be killed.

HUNTING THE ORCS

At first, the trail followed by the Orc-band is obvious — the wet earth around Lake Evendim holds tracks well — but as the Orcs march north-east, it becomes harder to track them.

The heroes must complete a **HUNTING** skill endeavour to follow the Orcs' trail.

- The endeavour is a Laborious one (Resistance 6) and the time limit is 6. Each Player-hero is allowed to attempt two rolls each day.
- If the endeavour fails, the iron sinews of the Orcs coupled with worsening weather proves too much for the Company, and they lose the trail. Still, they can find Rath Sereg by searching the Ettenmoors. Such a search takes several weeks of wandering in the wastes though, and they lose all chances of rescuing the captives before the Orcs reach their stronghold.

The Loremaster can enliven the chase interspersing the narration with the following events:

- **THE DEAD DWARF:** The heroes come across the corpse of one of the prisoners from the Vale of Gold, dumped in a shallow pit. This unlucky Dwarf, Glodi, has had his throat slit and his right hand hacked off. While a grisly sight, at least it's proof that the heroes are on the right track.
- **THE SHADOW OUT OF ANGMAR:** Clouds — heavy, black, and full of icy sleet — blow down from the north-east. This bad weather impedes the heroes' chase, and reduces the amount of daylight (Player-heroes are now allowed to make a maximum of one roll each day).
- **THE DROPPED TOKEN:** As the heroes hurry across the grey world beyond the North Downs, they spot a flash of gold amid the murk — it is a sprig of gorse from the Vale of Gold, far from home. Someone — one of the Dwarven prisoners — took this flower and dropped it as a sign.
- **THE CRAWLING HAND:** One of the heroes spots a pale shape scuttling across the rocks nearby. Searching, they discover a disembodied hand — it is the hand of one of the Dwarves from the Vale of Gold, hacked off by Hultmar. The hand is now unmoving, and it is possible that the grisly trophy was just dropped by the Orcs as they ran — but the hero who saw it would swear it was crawling.

THE REAR-GUARD

Hultmar fought at the Battle of Five Armies and survived the bloody retreat from Erebor, so he knows well the value of a rear-guard. He has a number of his sturdiest Orcs march well behind the body of the host, so that they might warn him of any pursuers.

At a suitable juncture during the chase (for example, should the Player-heroes all fail one round of rolls), the heroes encounter this rear-guard. There is one **Orc Guard** for each Player-hero in the Company.

Catching up with Hultmar

If the heroes manage to catch up with the Orcs, then they may attempt to rescue the captives. (Especially brave heroes might even sneak into the Orc-camp to question Hultmar Many-handed). If the Orcs have a sheltered place to camp and wait out the sunlight, then they set guards to watch over the captives during the day. Otherwise, the Orcs bind their captives' feet and shackle them to an iron spike driven into the ground. The Orcs also have lookouts stationed around their camp.

Hultmar Manyhanded takes his own precautions — he puts his collection of hands in a circle around him before spreading out on the ground to sleep. The Orcs whisper that the hands change position in the night, scuttling around Hultmar and warding off danger.

Player-heroes sneaking into a secure camp or cave must pass a STEALTH roll, *losing (1d)*. Sneaking in when the Orcs are caught in the open is easier, and the STEALTH roll suffers no penalties. In either case, if the roll fails, the alarm is raised and the Orcs rise up to slay the intruders.

The captive Dwarves are too weak to fight, and cannot run quickly — the heroes must either find a hiding place or lure any Orc hunters away once they escape, or Hultmar's Orcs may simply recapture the escaped prisoners once night falls. The Orcs will not spend more than a single night searching for escaped Dwarves.

If the heroes get into a fight with the Orcs, assume there are two **Orc Soldiers** for each Player-hero at the start of the battle.

At the end of each round of combat, roll a Feat die and divide the result by 2, rounding down, to determine how many more Orcs join the fray. On an ᛟ, Hultmar Manyhanded joins the fray. On a ᚠ, some distraction gives the heroes a chance to flee.

Rescuing the Dwarves

The nine Dwarves captured by Hultmar are:

- **ALVIR**, a doughty and resilient young Dwarf
- **VIGNI**, a dour and depressed smith
- **BUR**, a young Dwarf-woman, apprentice to Vigni
- **THROR**, a distant cousin of Thorin Oakenshield, and proud of his royal connections
- **AIL**, a wise old Dwarf sage
- **BOFIN**, clumsy but lucky
- **HILVI**, a talented weaponsmith
- **GLOMAR**, a secretive and taciturn hunter
- **DVARI**, merry with his axe

If Hultmar murders any of his captives, choose the victim at random.

The Prisoner's Tale

If the Player-heroes rescue one of the Dwarves, either now or later in the scenario, then the Dwarf tells them this tale. Alternatively, if events go awry, the heroes may hear the tale as a last confession from the blood-flecked lips of a dying Dwarf. If multiple Dwarves are rescued (or are mortally wounded), then Alvir, Ail, Hilvi or Glomar are the best candidates.

The Dwarf says that he accompanied Flonar south to the distant city of Tharbad, and from there up into the mountains. For a time, they travelled with a Man from the south, but they parted ways before they reached the Redhorn Pass. Flonar and the Dwarf climbed the pass — but they were not bound for Wilderland. No, Flonar had a great secret — a hidden way into Khazad-Dûm! A way that led to an ancient watchpost overlooking the pass!

How Flonar discovered this route, the Dwarf does not know, but the Dwarf leader was hopeful that the Orcs did not know of that entrance into the mountain fortress. Flonar even dared dream that the Dwarves could one day use this route to retake the city in a surprise assault, just as Thorin Oakenshield's companions planned to use the hidden door into Erebor to strike at Smaug.

Alas! They entered Moria, and found that Orcs had trespassed even into the hidden watchpost. The Orcs must have found their way there only recently, for those particular halls were still mostly unspoiled and unlooted.

A Grisly Homecoming

25 days after the sack of the Vale of Gold, the Orcs return to their lair in the Fort of Blood. This fortress lies in the western Ettenmoors. Long ago, it was an outpost of Angmar, built by Evil Men; now, the ruins are overgrown and inhabited by Orcs. The ghastly name of the place originally referred to the reddish brambles that grow in great profusion there, but now the title is earned by Hultmar's practise of smearing the entrails of his victims across the stones, to attract carrion birds.

While the walls of the fort have fallen, there are cellars and caves beneath it that are infested with Orcs. Rath Sereg is described fully in *Part 5: Rath Sereg*.

If the Orcs bring home prisoners, they are dragged into the caverns below and imprisoned. The iron gates of Rath Sereg clang shut, like the tolling of some dreadful bell. There can be no hope for them unless hope comes from outside.

PART 4: COUNCIL UNDER THE MOUNTAINS

The Loremaster should present this scene if the heroes return to Floki or bring word of the sack of the Vale of Gold to the Dwarf-lords of the Ered Luin.

FLOKI'S GRIEF

If the heroes have not already met Floki, then they may seek him out after having discovered the corpse of his brother. Wherever the heroes seek Floki — in Bree, in Ered Luin, or on the Road — they find him, as if fate is eager to add to his sorrows.

Floki is appalled to learn of his brother's death at the Vale of Gold. He tears at his beard, weeps, gnashes his teeth — and then rashly swears an oath. If the heroes are his friends, he invites them to join him. *"I swear by Aulë the Maker and Durin Deathless, by all the Powers of the West and those below in the dark, that I shall have vengeance. Death to he who slew my brother, and death to anyone who stands between me and my revenge!"* Such an oath is a perilous and ill-chosen one, but Floki will not be dissuaded. He urges the heroes to accompany him to the halls of the Dwarves in the Blue Mountains to gather a force to hunt down the Orcs.

If the heroes ask about the necklace carried by Flonar, Floki does not recognise it. He guesses that it was a treasure that his brother recovered from Moria (in truth, Flonar stole it from the archives in the Blue Mountains).

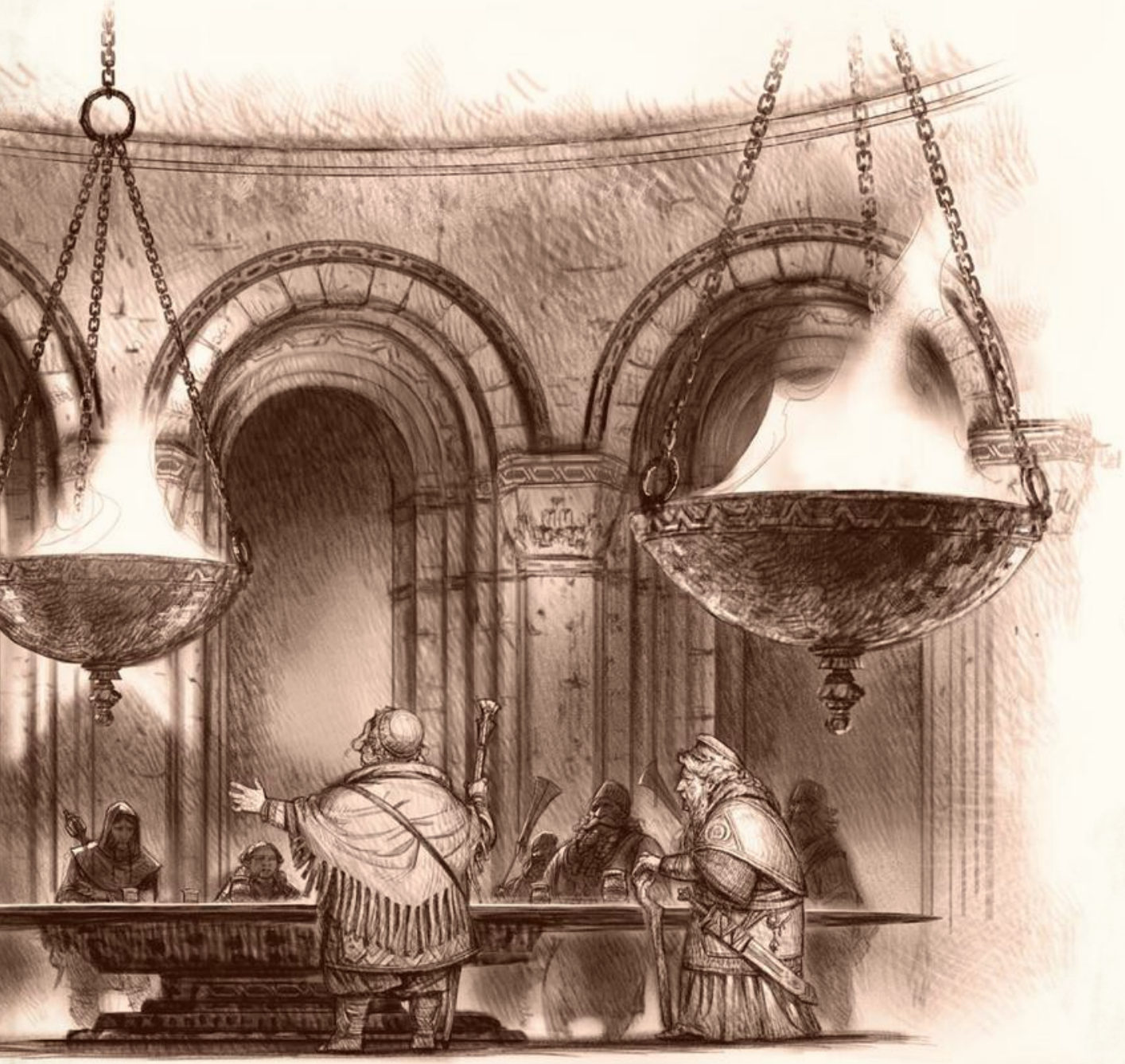
THE HALLS OF THE DWARVES

Eventually, rumours and tidings of the assault on the Vale of Gold reach the Dwarves dwelling in the Blue Mountains, and a council is convened. Once ruled by Thorin Oakenshield, the communities of the Ered Luin enjoyed a time of plenty and prosperity, drawing wayward Dwarves from as far south as Dunland. When the Dragon was slain, many Dwarves chose to return to Erebor, leaving only the oldest and most illustrious Dwarf-lords to preserve the traditions of the lost mountain-cities of the First Age, Nogrod and Belegost. Today, the Blue Mountains are ruled by many chieftains and no kings, a land where proud Dwarves labour and nurse the memory of lost glories.

The council is called in the Halls of the Dwarves, the main Dwarf-hold dug on the east side of the Blue Mountains, to the north of the Gulf of Lune. The underground city extends deep into the mountains, but its halls have seen better days. Clearly built to house a much larger community than the one inhabiting it, the Dwarf-hold is ancient and vast, and its draughty chambers and rune-scored passages are poorly lit.

ORDER OF EVENTS

This scene uses the Council rules, but changes the order of events slightly — swap Step 1 (Set Resistance) and Step 2 (Introduction). So, the Player-heroes arrive, introduce themselves, there's some intrigue, and then they decide what they're actually asking for from the Dwarves.



The Council Begins

In the hall chosen for the council seven large braziers burn with tall flames, their light and heat struggling to chase away the shadows and dampness from the tall-ceilinged room. The gathering is overseen by a Dwarven elder with clouded eyes named Vilia, a veteran of the Battle of Azanulbizar. She was struck by a poisoned Orc-arrow in that battle, and the venom ate away her nerves. She walks with difficulty, so she is carried in on a palanquin by four stout Dwarves. Other Dwarves file into the council chamber in the mountain's heart, and when the chamber's seats are full, Vilia thumps a staff onto the ground.

"We are gathered," she says, *"at the request of Floki, second son of Flokar. Dark tidings have come to us of the Vale of Gold. These travellers came from the hill, and brought news."*

> Vilia asks the Player-heroes to introduce themselves, and to tell the tale of the Vale of Gold (this is the Introduction step of the council; note the result of the Company's rolls, and any ᛉ rolled, to set the time limit for the council).

The Dwarves grumble and shout when the heroes describe the fate of the Dwarves at the Vale of Gold, and become especially angered if the heroes mention how Flonar's corpse was defiled or that prisoners were taken. Vilia raises her hand for silence.

"There is more to this tale," she says, *"and that must be told to, before Floki's plea may be justly heard. Many of you know this story, but others may not, and it shall be spoken here again, that the stone may remember."*

Vilia explains that Flonar was one of several who defied both custom and the word of King Dáin by seeking to enter the lost city of Moria. She does not know if it was foolish talk, or if Flonar ever put his plans into action, but it is forbidden either way. *"I was there at Azanulbizar,"* says Vilia, *"when Frerin, son of Thráin, fell in battle. I fought alongside Thorin in the oakwood, and I saw Azog slay Náin of the Iron Hills. I saw young Dáin Ironfoot avenge his father — not slow was his axe that day! I watched him spring up the steps of Durin's Gate, and halt there on the very threshold of the First Hall. He said then that a foresight was on him, and that the Dwarves shall not return to Moria until a greater power walks those halls."* She shakes her head, painfully. *"Who can gainsay a foresight bought at such cost? Only a fool. It was for this folly that Flonar was shunned, and he left these mountains to dwell in the Vale of Gold. Treasure consumed his thoughts, and treasure brought ruin to him."*

Floki splutters with anger and starts to speak, but Vilia again silences him. *"I mislike rashly spoken words — they lead to sorrow. We shall convene again in one hour, so that we may choose wisely with clear heads."*

THE STOLEN KEY

If the Player-heroes mention the clasp bourne by Flonar, or talk of a key that opens a secret entrance to Moria, then Vilia hastily silences them. *"That matter should only be spoken of privately."*

INTRIGUE IN THE HALLS

Both Floki and Vilia approach the Player-heroes. Depending on the playing group's preferred playstyle, they might speak to the whole group at once, or target individual characters — Floki might prefer to speak to more impulsive, warlike characters while Vilia targets those who seem slower to act.

THE FURY OF FLOKI: Floki is so furious he can hardly talk — he is convinced that the council intends to ignore the death of his brother! They are going to say that Flonar brought disaster on himself by leaving the safety of the Blue Mountains and going to live in virtual exile at the Vale of Gold. Cowards! When King Thrór was killed at the gates of Moria, all the Dwarves answered the call to war! They slaughtered all the Orcs in the Misty Mountains!

And now — now that the Dwarves are stronger, and the Orcs weaker after the Battle of Five Armies — now they have grown so fat and lazy on Dragon-gold that they will not lift a finger to avenge poor Flonar!

Floki begs the characters to help him convince the Dwarves to go to war against the Orcs who killed Flonar. If he has not already sworn an oath in front of the heroes, he does so now. If he has already sworn the oath, he reminds the heroes of it — and if they swore too, he calls on them to remember their words.

THE COUNSEL OF VILIA: Vilia has her aides escort her into a private room, then dismisses them so she can speak to the Player-heroes privately. She thanks them for bringing word of the attack on the Vale of Gold. If they tracked the Orcs to Rath Sereg or rescued any of the prisoners, she rewards them with gold (5 points of Treasure for the location of Rath Sereg, 10 points for each saved prisoner).

Then, she continues: Floki, she says, is overcome with grief and anger. He calls for vengeance — but he is no king. Few Dwarves will rally to his cause, and there are too many Orcs for him to defeat alone. If the heroes are truly Floki's friends, they will put an end to his folly, and make him see sense. It may be bitter to speak against a friend, and Floki will not be quick to forgive them, but it is for the best.

Flonar was a fool; do not let Floki follow him down the same ruinous path. As for the Orcs who sacked the Vale of Gold, there is little that can be done about them. They are far away, across the breadth of the Lone-lands, and secure in their mountain fortresses.

She asks if the characters know any reason why the Orcs marched so far to attack the Vale of Gold. If the characters mention the Mithril-chain, then she bows her head, and says that a key to a secret way into Moria was brought out of the wreck of that city by King Thráin I. A copy of that key was held in the archives in the Blue Mountains. She suspects Flonar stole it. She asks the characters to keep this quiet — if the other Dwarves knew that there was a secret way into Moria, it might inspire others to the same folly as Flonar.

If the heroes do as Vilia suggests and ensure that Floki's plea is ignored by the council, she promises she will aid them in future.

Vilia

Some are gifted with wisdom; for others, it is hard-won. In her youth, Vilia was an impetuous Dwarf-woman, unwilling to be sheltered and kept hidden as is the custom for many of her sisters. She took up the axe, and when the call went out to the Seven Houses of the Dwarves to avenge the death of Thror, she answered it eagerly. She was the first through the gate of Mount Gram, and not little was the count of the heads she clove that day. So great was her renown that word of her prowess reached even the ears of Azog, and he ordered his Goblin-archers to target her in particular. A poisoned dart felled Vilia by the shore of the Mirrormere.

She should have perished, but she fought on, and clung to life. When she awoke, her limbs were as stone. She set herself to a new path; if her limbs no longer obeyed her, then eye and tongue would have to do instead. She became a historian and counsellor.

One bold young stripling of a Dwarf once asked if she regretted joining the fray, and Vilia answered thusly: *"I wish I had not been injured, but I cannot change my decision. And who knows – perhaps if I had not been there that day, the battle would have gone worse for the Dwarves, and more would have perished. No, what I regret is that I joined the fray without consideration. I was young and hot-blooded, but taking up the axe is a decision that should be made reluctantly, and with due consideration. The axe-blade comes hot and blazing from the forge, but it must be tempered and cooled before it is of any use."*

OCCUPATION: Dwarven sage

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Honourable, Patient

THE CHOICE

When the council resumes, Floki stands and declares that this insult to the Dwarves cannot go unanswered. His brother is dead, and two dozen other Dwarves are dead or in shackles! The Orcs must answer for this! He calls upon the Dwarves of the Blue Mountains to muster an army and march to war against the Orcs who did this. Vilia turns to the Player-heroes (especially any Dwarves in the Company) and asks what they would counsel.

- A **reasonable** request (Resistance 3) would be to follow Vilia's advice, and suggest that the Dwarves do nothing rash. They might suggest investigating the Orcs, or sending a small fellowship of heroes to rescue any prisoners. Suggesting this cautious course of action likely enrages Floki.
- A **bold** request (Resistance 6) would be to ignore both Vilia and Floki, and suggest a middle ground — mustering a small raiding party of Dwarves to extract vengeance upon the Orcs. This would be a highly dangerous quest, as the Dwarves would be heavily outnumbered and far from any allies. However, it would satisfy Floki's demand for vengeance while also ensuring that the Dwarves do not go to war.
- An **outrageous** request (Resistance 9) would be to support Floki's call for all-out war against the Orcs.

THE DEBATE

The time limit of the council is set using the result of the characters' Introduction rolls. All skill rolls can be modified by the attitude of the assembled Dwarven dignitaries.

- If there are no Dwarves in the Company, then the attitude of the council is Reluctant — *lose (1d).*
- If there is at least one Dwarf in the Company, or the heroes know the location of Rath Sereg, then the attitude of the council is Open (no modifier).
- If there's a Dwarf and the characters have already found Rath Sereg, then the council is Friendly — *gain (1d).*

In the Interaction phase, the heroes may speak in support of whatever course of action they suggested. Useful Skills include:

- **INSIGHT**, to see that many of the Dwarves in the council disliked Flonar and would be loath to go to war to avenge him — or to spot which Dwarves are undecided and might be swayed to support Floki.
- **BATTLE**, to suggest strategies, to tell of the Orcs' stronghold, or to warn of the dangers of crossing all of the Lone-lands on a fruitless quest for revenge.
- **ENHEARTEN, PERSUADE OR COURTESY** to speak eloquently in support of a course of action.
- **RIDDLE**, to stall or speak empty words.
- **TRAVEL**, to speak of the dangers of the Wild.

If the characters speak of the stolen key, it gives an automatic success.

RESULT: If the council ends in Disaster, then Floki explodes in anger. He blames both the Dwarves for being cowards, and the heroes for betraying him. "*Why?! By Durin's beard, it's all so clear now! There were no Orcs! It was you who attacked the Vale of Gold and murdered Flonar, and then brought this nonsensical tale of Orcs to cover up their misdeeds!*" Floki snatches up his axe and attacks the heroes; he is quickly restrained by the Dwarves and exiled from the Blue Mountains like his brother.

If the council elects to follow Vilia's advice, then the Dwarves choose to do nothing. Depending on how events played out, Floki may be bitterly resentful of the heroes, or just blame Vilia for the decision. Either way, Floki declares his intent to set out in search of vengeance. The heroes may accompany him if they wish.

If the council agrees to follow Floki's call, then the Dwarves lend support to the cause against Hultmar and the Orcs of Rath Sereg. The degree of support depends on the nature of the request.

- A **reasonable** request (Resistance 3) could be asking the Dwarves to pay the Player-heroes if they find Rath Sereg and rescue any Dwarven prisoners, and if they manage to slay Hultmar. The heroes will be paid 5 Treasure each for this quest, plus 5 Treasure for each prisoner rescued, plus another 5 each for Hultmar's head (halve these values on a Success with Woe).
- A **bold** request (Resistance 6) could be as above, plus the characters may each take two items (either wargear or useful items) from the armouries of the Dwarves, or a single item on a Success with Woe.
- An **outrageous** request (Resistance 9) could be asking the Dwarves to march to war! On a Success, hundreds of Dwarven warriors muster at the Blue Mountains before marching on Rath Sereg. The Player-heroes may accompany this host to battle, and if they do they will get all the rewards above. Optionally, a character (especially a Dwarf) might be awarded a Magical Weapon.

PART 5: RATH SEREG

From there the power was spreading far and wide, and away far east and south there were wars and growing fear. Orcs were multiplying again in the mountains.

RUMOUR

The numbers of the Orcs in the Misty Mountains are growing again, mark my words! They're creeping down from the north once again, and soon they'll block all the passes into Wilderland. They're coming west, too, down the Hoarwell and through the hills, making lairs in all the old ruins and barrows. I wouldn't sleep soundly, if I were you. You never know when there'll be an Orc at your door.

OLD LORE

Of old there was the realm of Angmar, where Evil Men dwelt. They raised watchtowers and fortresses on their borders, and from these forts they sent raiders to trouble the lands of the King. For many years, they had great success, and the strength of the north was broken. Yet, before Angmar could lay claim to all of Eriador, a fleet of ships stronger than any that had been seen in an Age of the world

sailed from the south, and from that fleet came a great host, and Angmar was destroyed. The city of Carn Dûm and all the border forts were razed or fell into disrepair.

BACKGROUND

Rath Sereg was once a mighty fortress, guarding the southern approaches to the capital of the Witch-king at Carn Dûm. At its height, thousands of soldiers — Men and Orcs — dwelt here, and stranger creatures bred by the Witch-king's sorcery lurked in the dungeons below. The fortress was virtually emptied of troops before the Battle of Fornost in T.A. 1975, and only a handful of sentries remained behind. They watched the horizon, expecting to see the banners of Angmar returning in triumph, their allies laden down with booty from the sack of Arthedain. Instead, to their dismay, they saw the banners of the Lords of Gondor and the symbol of the White Tree.

Had the defenders stayed at their posts, then Rath Sereg might have held out for weeks, for back then its walls were sturdy and tall, it was well-provisioned, and even a small few guards could have defended its gates against the might of Gondor. Had they stayed, then Rath Sereg might have checked the advance of the enemy, and given the scattered armies of Angmar time to reform. But the courage of Evil Men was lacking at the pinch, and they fled.

Prince Eärnur of Gondor ordered that the fortress be put beyond use. There was no time for even the skilled sappers of Gondor to level Rath Sereg, but they collapsed much of the underground cellars and dungeons, breached the walls in a dozen places, and set such a blaze in the main keep that the very stone melted.

Rath Sereg laid in ruins for many centuries. At times, Orcs or Men dwelt here again, for even the wreck of a mighty fortress is a strong place, but it was not until the Orc-lord Hultmar came here after the Battle of Five Armies that any work was done to rebuild the fortress. The Orcs could not rebuild the central keep, but they have mended up the gaps in the walls with loose stones, and excavated enough of the tunnels to house an army of Orcs. Hultmar dreams of rebuilding Rath Sereg into a mighty fortress and establishing himself as warlord of Angmar.

HULTMAR'S GUEST

Also present at Rath Sereg is the key villain of the whole campaign — the Mordor Orc Snava. He travelled to Rath Sereg after his secret lair in Moria was disturbed by Flonar, and convinced Hultmar to mount the raid on the Vale of Gold. Now that the meddling Dwarves have been dealt with, Snava intends to continue on north to the Hill of Fear. However, he has yet to depart.

LOCATIONS

1. OUTER WALL

The walls of the fort are overgrown with red weeds and gorse bushes, and the long slow movement of the earth has half-buried them in places, but this is still a strong and easily-defended place. The chief gaps in the defences are the breaches made long ago by the armies of Gondor; these have been filled with stones, but it's possible for a company of fighters to climb these piles of loose stone and gain the top of the walls that way.

2. GATEHOUSE

The Orcs have rebuilt the old gatehouse, although they lack the skill to repair the gates. Instead of the gates of wood and steel that once hung here, these are gates of black iron forged in Gundabad. The keeper of the gatehouse is a Great Orc named Bataur, who uses his great ring of keys as a knuckleduster (Bataur is a Great Orc Bodyguard, see page 149 of *The One Ring*). He has keys to both the gatehouse and the prison.

3. RUINS

Most of the buildings of the inner courtyard are just piles of weed-choked rubble. Goblins lurk amid the debris, armed with wicked darts and bows.

4. TOWER

This tower, built atop the remains of the burnt-out keep, is a pallid imitation of the matchless Barad-Dûr, at least in Hultmar's delusional mind. To most, it appears as a rough-made watchtower of black stone and steel, erected above a grisly hall where Hultmar holds court — but he has grand plans for expansion. Dwarven prisoners from the Vale of Gold are put to work by day building the tower.

5. FORGE

A crude forge for the making of weapons and armour. Other Dwarves are forced to work here.

6. ORC-WARREN

Tunnels and caves used by the Orcs. Some are the old cellars of the fortress, cleared of debris; others are the worm-like tunnellings of Goblins. There are hundreds of Goblins in these warrens, far too many for any hero to defeat in battle.

7. PRISON

Dwarven prisoners are kept chained up in this cave when not working in the forge or on Hultmar's tower.

8. CAVE OF CRAWLING HANDS

Hultmar's sleeping quarters are guarded by this ghastly chamber, where dozens of severed hands sit on shelves like watchful spiders.

NO, SERIOUSLY, DO THE HANDS MOVE OR NOT?

Ambiguity is often spookier than certainty. A giant spider lurking in the dark tunnels of Cirith Ungol is scary, but so too are three-headed vulture statues that never act, never move, but just stare. If you describe Hultmar's severed hands as moving, then that's almost to be expected in a fantasy game full of ghosts and Goblins. If the hands are just there, or drop to the ground from above in unexpected places, and the Player-heroes cannot tell if they are actually alive and moving or if it is just a series of coincidences and cruel Orc-jests, it's much more disconcerting.

HULTMAR MANYHANDED
Bold, Cunning

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 7

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
56	2	7	+3	4

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Heavy Scimitar 3 (5/18, Break Shield), Broad-headed Spear 3 (5/16, Pierce)

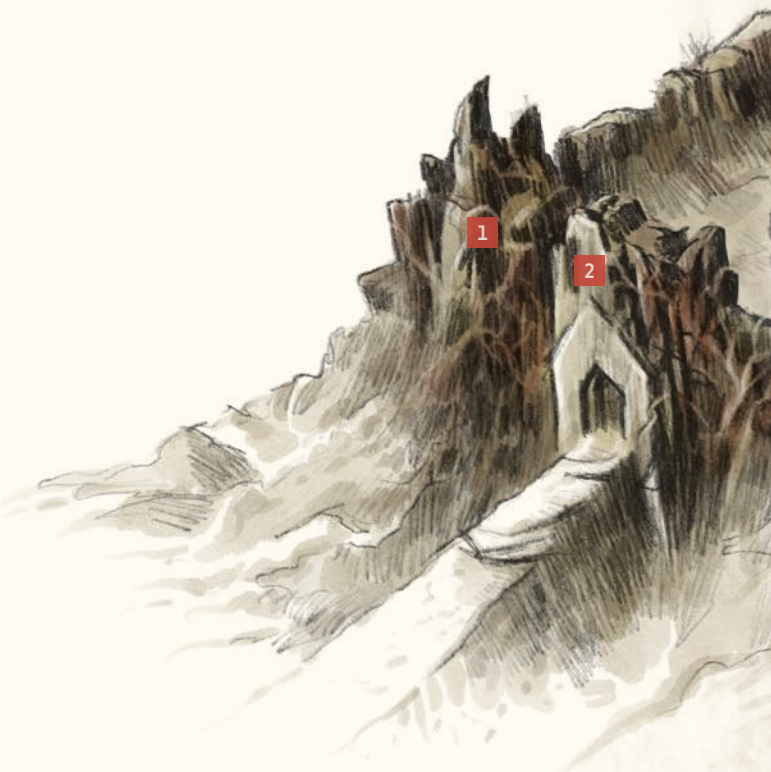
FELL ABILITIES: *Hatred (Dwarves)*. All attacks against Dwarves are *Favoured.*

Horrible Strength. If the creature scores a Piercing Blow with a close combat attack, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

Snake-like Speed. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

Yell of Triumph. Spend 1 Hate to restore 1 Hate to all other Orcs in the fight.

Horrible Hands. Spend 1 Hate to make all Player-heroes in sight gain 2 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail the Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.



9. HULTMAR'S LAIR

The Orc warlord's chamber is filled with maps of Eriador — mostly stolen from Dwarven travellers, although there are some old parchments obtained from the thieves of Tharbad too — and schemes for conquest. In a heavy iron-bound chest, he keeps most of the treasures taken from the Vale of Gold and other raids, together with a great amount of Moria-gold given to him by Snava as payment for the attack on the Vale of Gold. All in all, this is a Greater Hoard of Treasure.

10. SNAVA'S CHAMBER

The Orc spy dwells in this chamber. However, the Player-heroes will not be able to capture Snava in this adventure — if they get close, have Snava vanish through a secret tunnel, forewarned by the dreadful magic of the Hill of Fear.

Even abandoned, the Orc spy's rooms contain some clues to his recent activity; there's a heavy fur-lined coat, a shell amulet similar to the one found on Déor's corpse, and two large and ornate knives. One was made in Minas Morgul, and has the sheen of new-forged steel. The other was made in Angmar more than a thousand years ago; it is weathered and rusted — but the two knives are otherwise identical, marked with the same dreadful symbols. One was wielded by the dark priests of Angmar; the other by the acolytes of Sauron in the Morgul Vale. Snava used these knives in blasphemous rites to awaken the power of the Hill.

Schemes and Trouble

RESCUING THE PRISONERS

Hultmar took nine Dwarves from the Vale of Gold, and now forces them to work at the forge or to build his tower. By night, the Dwarves labour under the watchful eye of Orcs; by day, they are chained up in the prison cell.

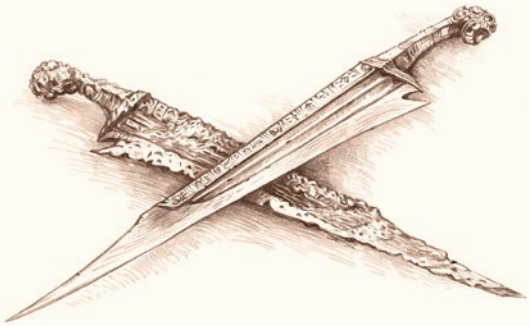
- Opening the iron door of the prison cell requires an **ATHLETICS** or **CRAFT** roll, or stealing the gaoler's key.
- The nine prisoners are all too weak and malnourished to move quickly or to fight, although a successful **ENHEARTEN** roll could stir them to one last heroic effort.

If the Dwarves lay siege to Rath Sereg, then Hultmar threatens to execute his hostages one by one unless the Dwarves withdraw. This is a ruse; if Hultmar does convince the Dwarves to withdraw, then he sends messengers to Mount Gundabad to muster a larger Orc-host.

SNAVA'S SORCERY

If the Orcs suspect that there are enemies lurking nearby or trying to rescue the prisoners, then Snava can call on the same fell spirits the heroes encountered on the distant Isle of the Mother (see *Unhoused Wraiths*, on page 38). It takes time even for houseless spirits to travel all the way from the Hill of Fear to Rath Sereg, as the horrors cannot endure the light of the sun.

Snava might call the spirits one night (by lighting a bonfire and sacrificing one of the prisoners in a dark rite), and the ghosts appear the following night, howling around Rath Sereg and revealing the hiding places of the intruders.



SNAVA'S BLADES

These wicked blades are forged in the shape of knives, long enough to be considered Short Swords. The one made in Minas Morgul has the Superior Fell, Grievous, and Keen Rewards (consider the effects as if it was of Elven craftsmanship), while the one made in Angmar is only Fell and Grievous, and possesses no Enchanted Rewards. However, if an attack with either of these weapons results in a Wound, the target is also poisoned unless it is Undead (see page 134 of *The One Ring*), and if it dies while poisoned in this way, it will rise as a Fell Wraith the next night. Killing a creature in this way counts as a Misdeed worth 4 Shadow points, regardless of the circumstances.

The blades are both cursed with the Curse of Weakness (Curse of Vengeance), and the one made in Minas Morgul also has the Shadow Taint (see pages 168–169 of *The One Ring*).

SNAVA FLEES

If Rath Sereg is overrun or the heroes sneak into the fortress and attempt to attack him, Snava flees through a secret tunnel leading from his chamber (Location 10). Snava always escapes (have him call upon evil spirits to cover his escape if necessary), but an especially tenacious character could wound Snava as the Orc flees, and the Orc will still bear this injury when encountered again.

Tracking Snava across the north leads to *The Quest of Amon Guruthos* (see page 91).

THE SIEGE OF RATH SEREG

A handful of heroes cannot lay siege to the fortress, not even if they are aided by a band of stalwart Dwarves. The heroes must find a way to sneak past the sentries and climb the walls, or force the great iron doors.

However, if the Dwarves come in force with the heroes, then there is a great battle between the Orcs and Dwarves. Orc watchers see the approaching Dwarves from a distance, and at first it seems like the courage of the Orcs wavers, and that they might break and flee even before battle is joined. Then Hultmar rushes up to the top of his tower, and blows his horn. *"To the walls, dogs! Stand and fight! Let them break upon us!"* The Orcs scramble for the safety of the fort, scurrying up the half-built walls and slamming the great iron gates behind them. Goblin archers huddle atop the walls, bows at the ready. Mighty Orcs roar behind the gates. (If the Dwarves have the wit to attack when the sun is high in the sky, the Orcs must cower in the shadows of the fort, and cannot guard the walls as much as they should.)

Now, Rath Sereg is well-fortified, but not enough of it has been repaired to withstand Dwarven siegecraft. When battle is joined, the Dwarves quickly identify the weaker sections of the walls, and hew at their foundations. Other Dwarves armed with great shields guard the sappers. The Orcs make several sallies, trying to stop the sappers; the Player-heroes may be instrumental in countering these assaults.

Near dusk, the Dwarves have dug enough to undermine one of the filled breaches in the wall, and with a great cry of triumph they knock away the supports. There comes an avalanche of stone as the wall gives way, and then amid the dust and debris, the Dwarves advance, a wedge of steel pushing into the heart of Rath Sereg. Iron-shod boots trample the red flowers, and it seems as though the Orcs are on the verge of defeat. Cowardly Goblins flee to take refuge in the Orc-warren, or scramble over the walls at the rear of the fort, away from the Dwarven advance.

It seems as though all is lost for the Orcs. If the Player-heroes are in the thick of the fighting, they may encounter Hultmar Manyhanded and his retinue as they make their last stand in the ruins of the keep.

Then… the wind shifts, blowing from the north with an icy breath, and, once again, the heroes hear that same howling of evil spirits loosed from the Hill of Fear. Unnatural darkness swallows the fort, and the Dwarves are dismayed by the terror of the spectres. At the same time, more Orcs join the fray. They march under the banner of Mount Gram. These fresh Orcs attack the rear of the Dwarven host.

Outnumbered, overwhelmed by the howling spirits, exhausted by the day's battle, the Dwarves have little hope of escape. A few might break the encircling line of Orcs and escape across the plains, to be hunted down by Orcs. Of course, the actions of the Player-heroes might affect this fate — if they drive the spirits away and rally the surviving Dwarves, they might be able to eke out a bitter, hard-won victory, or at least ensure more of the Dwarves escape with their lives.

THE RANGERS ARRIVE!

If the heroes aided Orothel the Ranger, or if they are allies of Gilraen, then the Rangers of the North might arrive out of the grey mists in the nick of time, stern-faced warriors striking in the rear of the Orcs' lines to give the Dwarves a chance to reform and retreat. The Rangers are accompanied by the sons of Elrond, their swords flashing as they drive back the spirits and lift the hearts of their Company with song.

Different Patrons might provide different aid to their allies – Balin might show up with Dwarves from the Blue Mountains, or Círdan might send Elves from the Havens. Gandalf might arrive in the nick of time, light blazing from his staff to dismay the Orcs.

PART 6: HOMEWARD BOUND

How do the Player-heroes return to the Dwarf-halls of the Ered Luin? Are they coming back in triumph, accompanying prisoners snatched from Orc-bondage? Or are they bringing news of the defeat of the Dwarf-host, or a tale of hard-won victory?

Did Floki survive, or shall he be entombed along with his brother?

If the heroes did well — either in rescuing the prisoners or in battling Hultmar — then Vilia entrusts them with some Dwarf-forged weapons. *"Dark days are coming,"* she whispers, *"and it is best that good steel not sleep under the mountains."*

CHAPTER 6

The Quest of Amon Guruthos

Get out you old Wight! Vanish in the sunlight!
Shrivel like the cold mist, like the winds go wailing,
Out into the barren lands, far beyond the mountains!
Come never here again! Leave your barrow empty!
Lost and forgotten be, darker than the darkness,
Where gates stand for ever shut, till the world is mended.

The heroes set out on a journey to the far north, to seek answers among the folk of that region. Long is the journey, and perilous, but the characters may find friends amid the snow and ice — even friends unlooked-for.

The Forodwaith — the northern waste — is a land virtually unknown to most people of Middle-earth. In ancient times, it lay under the dominion of the Enemy, for the fortress of Angband lay in that region. Elves crossing from the West made their way through the icy wastes, but not even the great mariners of Númenor braved the crushing ice-fields and treacherous bays. Mortals have long dwelt there, a hardy and secretive folk who learned to survive in the cold lands.

The heroes have met one such tribe in a previous adventure — the folk of Jagat, who dwelt in the western portion of the Forodwaith, around the Ice Bay of Forochel. So, one possible path would be to retrace the famous journey of Arvedui Last-king, and go north along the Ered Luin to the barren lands of the Cape of Forochel. Another option is to take the long road to Lond Daer (or the Grey Havens, if the characters are friendly with Círdan) and sail around the cape into the frozen waters.

The bravest option is to follow the path that the unfortunate Déor probably intended to tread, and follow the line of the Misty Mountains past the dreadful haunted ruins of Carn Dûm, and come into the Forodwaith from the south.

If the Company approaches Forochel from the west, run *Part 1: Cold Welcome*. If they approach from the south, skip straight onto *Part 2: The Wasteland*.

THE CHOICE OF PATHS

There are several clues that might set the Company on a path leading north.

- The Player-heroes have found the shell amulet on the corpse of Déor – its possession implies a connection to the Snowmen of Forochel. If Déor was a spy out of Mordor, why was he on his way to the Lossoth?
- Similarly, if the heroes triumphed at the fort of Rath Sereg, then clues found there in Snava's chamber point north too.
- They might even set off into the North in search of the Hill with no more guidance than the vague rumour that the Hill of Fear lies somewhere beyond Carn Dûm, or follow their dreams or the guidance of their Patron.

For Player-heroes who need a little more prompting:

- Characters who undertake to *Gather Rumours* during a Fellowship Phase hear stories of bad dreams and ill-omens among the few folk who dwell in the northern reaches of Eriador. The Elven travelling-companies speak of sinister voices on the wind.
- A Patron might send the characters north to investigate the growing threat of the Hill of Fear. Gandalf, Balin, Gilraen or Bilbo might recommend the landward route past the ruins of Carn Dûm; Círdan recommends travel by sea. Tom doesn't care how the characters get there, as long as it rhymes.
- Elwing of Lond Daer might bring word of peril from the North, carrying a message from Jagat of the Lossoth. She tells the heroes that the people of the Uttermost North are troubled by foul dreams and evil forces, much like they encountered on the Isle of the Mother.

Planning the Expedition

Reaching the far northern expanses of Forodwaith is such a long journey that the Company likely needs to carefully plan their route. There is little good hunting north of Evendim, so the Player-heroes cannot rely on living off the land, and would be wise to find a place to resupply en route.

The regular Journey rules assume that the characters are travelling in lands where they can find food while travelling; Journey Events targeting a Hunter may force the Company to delay for a short time, but do not force them to turn back.

> Foraging in the Northern Waste is so difficult that all HUNTING rolls are *Ill-favoured*, and increase the Fatigue penalty for a failed roll by 1.

Part 1: Cold Welcome

The Lossoth dwell primarily on the northern peninsula, far from their enemies, but sometimes cross the gulf to hunt in the lands around the Ice-bay. Jagat's tribe spends more of the season than most on its southern shores. Few folk of Eriador ever visit this land. The Player-heroes find themselves blinking at the harsh sunlight reflected off the snow that cloaks the mountainsides even in the height of summer. The days here are strangely long; the nights short and bright.

Like the other Snowmen, Jagat's tribe are nomadic, following the grazing of reindeer and the shifting seasons. They make skates of bone to travel swiftly over frozen ice and snow, and make skis from birch or climbing gear from bone to travel in the mountains. They dwell in tents of reindeer-hide that can easily be taken down and moved.

If the characters arrived here with Elwing of Lond Daer, then she knows where Jagat's tribe makes its camp, and she can sail the Company there directly. Otherwise, the characters must search for Jagat's kinfolk.

> On a successful EXPLORE roll, Jagat's tribe finds them; it requires a great or extraordinary success for a band of newcomers from the warm southlands to track down Snowmen who do not want to be found. If the roll fails, the Company fail to find Jagat's kinfolk, and must continue east into *Part 2: The Wasteland*.

Meeting Jagat

If the Player-heroes have a good relationship with Jagat, he welcomes them warmly and invites them to share his tent. He gives them food and other supplies if they are running short. He promises to introduce them to the chieftain of his tribe, Egel. If the characters parted with him on poor terms, then he is less welcoming, but the plight of the Lossoth in recent months is perilous enough for him to look to outsiders for aid.

Jagat tells the heroes that since they parted, the curse that troubled his expedition to the Isle of the Mother seems to have followed him home. The Lossoth hear strange voices in the air, and hunters in the woods report strange sights. Orcs have come down from the mountains, too.

Bad dreams plague the Lossoth. Many have dreamed of a dark hill in the east, and it is whispered that the Witch-king has returned from his kingdom in the hot south. The recurrent dreams can drive Men mad — or compel them to make offerings to the Witch-king.

Some Lossoth tribes have gone across the water to the northern shore, even though it is late in the year and they will suffer terribly from hunger. But others, he whispers, have gone back to the bad old ways, and offer… tribute to the Witch-king.

Others, like Jagat's kin, have retreated west, away from the old borders of Angmar. His uncle Egel is chieftain, and he has not yet decided what to do. Egel is cautious and mistrusts outsiders (especially if the events of *Messing About In Boats* went badly), and Jagat worries that Egel will fall back on the old ways out of necessity.

Jagat can present the Player-heroes to his uncle Egel, so they can ask for aid — but he hopes they can also convince the chieftain to turn his face from the East.

Egel

Egel is old and imperious, and puts the characters in mind of some bird of prey, with his gaunt features, wrinkled skin and piercing eyes. His face remains impassive and unreadable when speaking with the heroes. As far as he is concerned, the outside world can attend to itself, and the Lossoth should take no part in the affairs of the south.

OCCUPATION: Chieftain

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Stern, Wary

A COUNCIL WITH EGEL

Egel gathers the heroes around his campfire, but the leaping flames cannot drive away the chill of his glare.

The Loremaster can use the following guidelines to evaluate what the Company asks of him, applying the rules for councils:

- **Reasonable** requests (3 successes required) might be asking for food and basic provisions for the crossing of the Ice Waste, or asking Egel to tell the characters what he knows of the lands to the east.
- **Bold** requests (6 successes required) might be urging Egel to take his tribe across the Ice-bay, or asking for guides and other supplies such as Lossoth-style clothing in the journey across the Forochel.
- **Outrageous** requests (9 successes required) might be telling Egel to fight against the darkness of the Hill of Fear, and to rally the Snowmen against the Enemy.

Egel is Reluctant, so the Player-heroes *lose (1d)* by default. If Jagat vouches for the heroes, Egel is Open (no modifier). They *gain (1d)* if the heroes are especially Friendly with Egel, or if they undertook a Hunt with the Lossoth (see page 40).

Skills like **COURTESY** and **ENHEARTEN** work best here; attempts to browbeat proud Egel with **AWE** or confuse him with **RIDDLE** are likely to backfire.

WISE WORDS

In conversation, Egel reveals that a darkness has returned to this land; the Hill of Fear is awake once more. Ancient tales handed down from the dark days speak of the power of Angmar and the Great King in the North, of whom the Witch-king was but the shadow of a shadow.

Those tales speak, too, of Sea-kings and Elf-princes with bright swords who drove the Witch-king away. Where are these heroes now? If there is darkness even when the sun does not set, who will aid the Lossoth? Is it not wiser for the Lossoth to do what they must to survive?

If convinced to aid the Company, then Egel warns the Player-heroes about old tales. It is easy, he says, to find the Hill of Fear. They will see it on the horizon if they go east; indeed, there is no avoiding it. It will find them even if they do not seek it out. But the hill has a nightmarish property — no matter how long you walk towards it, it recedes, always lurking out of reach. And if you turn away from it, it pursues you until you can see nothing but that dark shape, until it drives you mad.

There is only one way to reach the Hill, and it is a perilous one. The Player-heroes must find a ruined castle of Angmar in the hills far to the east where an ageless sorcerer dwells. The tales say the place is called Sennas Gaer, and that the sorcerer holds the path to Amon Guruthos.

If the characters show Egel (or Jagat) the shell amulet from Déor's corpse, they identify it as the sigil marking oaths taken by the Lossoth of that region to serve the lord of Sennas Gaer, and to lend assistance to any messenger who bore such a device.

THE AID OF THE LOSSOTH

Should the Player-heroes convince Egel to send guides with them, then Egel sends Jagat and two of his warriors to escort the Company to the edge of Egel's territory. Egel warns Jagat to turn back before he sees the Hill of Fear with his waking eyes — it is one thing to dream of the Hill, and another thing to see it.

> Being guided by the Lossoth allows the Player-heroes to *gain (1d)* on any **AWARENESS**, **EXPLORE**, **HUNTING**, and **TRAVEL** rolls made while travelling in Forodwaith.

Egel may also outfit the characters with snow-shoes, Lossoth-style coats and furs, and other supplies for surviving in the north (see *Across the Ice*, below).

PART 2: THE WASTELAND

The portion of the Forodwaith north of the mountains was part of the Kingdom of Angmar in the dreadful days when the Witch-king held dominion there. Few of the Lossoth served him — his subjects were mostly Men of Eriador, as well as Orcs and other monsters. Now that Angmar is gone, the Lossoth sometimes travel through this wasteland on the way to their summer-camps in the north, but they do not linger here. It is not a good land to dwell in.

ACROSS THE ICE

In terms of the rules for Journeys, traversing the icy waste is resolved as entering a Perilous Area in a Dark Land with a rating of 3. This means that the Player-heroes must face 3 Events before they arrive in sight of Sennas Gaer.

- To resolve the Events the Loremaster may roll on the Journey Events table on page 112 of *The One Ring*, or on the *Northern Waste Events Table* below (if so, all Player-heroes suffer 2 points of Fatigue for each Event).

- The snowy wilderness of Forodwaith is a bitter, unfriendly land to those who do not know its way. The Player-heroes *lose (1d)* on all rolls while on the Journey, or *(2d)* if they do not have Lossoth-style furs and equipment.
- At a suitably unwelcome point in the Journey, the characters hear shrieking on the wind. More spirits from the Hill of Fear ride the air, dragging down more snow and storms from the Far North. For the rest of the Journey, all **AWARENESS** and **EXPLORE** rolls are *Ill-favoured*.

When finally through, the characters glimpse what looks like the remains of a castle on a hilltop. Smoke rises from the chimney, suggesting the place is still inhabited. A keen-sighted character might even spot a white figure standing in one of the windows, watching them struggle against the driving snow (go to *Part 3: Sennas Gaer*).

RUINS OF CARN DÛM

Travellers approaching this region from the south must pass the ruins of the city of the Witch-king. The realm of Angmar was destroyed so utterly by the alliance of the Lindon Elves and the army of Gondor that neither "Man nor Orc remained west of the mountains", but while the capital city of Carn Dûm was abandoned, it was not wholly destroyed, and has been re-occupied by Orcs and evil Men in the centuries since. Now, as the Hill of Fear awakens, it shall draw more people to dwell in the city, in anticipation of the Witch-king's return.

For now, however, Carn Dûm is a sullen, watchful evil. Adventures there are beyond the scope of this supplement.

NORTHERN WASTE EVENTS TABLE

FEAT DIE	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
	Snava's Malice	The heroes glimpse Snava the Orc in the distance. Spotting the Company, Snava might call down Orcs from the mountains, or summon the spirits of the Hill of Fear to delay them while he heads for Sennas Gaer.
1	Dreams of the Hill	All the Player-heroes are tormented by dreams of the Hill of Fear, rising like a dark wave. All heroes gain 2 Shadow points (Dread).
2	Snowstorms	Terrible snow storms make travel virtually impossible. This counts as Severe Cold, or Moderate for all those who wear Lossoth-style clothing and furs (*The One Ring*, page 134).
3	Not Welcome Here	The Company comes upon an eerie icon of woven branches and animal bones – a warning from the people of this land that they are not welcome here. All heroes gain 1 Shadow point (Dread).
4	Perilous Crevasse	Call for an **EXPLORE** roll; if the Company's Scout fails, they fall into a hidden chasm – a Grievous Fall (*The One Ring*, page 134).
5	Fell Shades on the Wind	Wraiths from the Hill of Fear torment the player-heroes (use the stats on page 109).
6	Hunter Ambush	The hunters lie in wait for the heroes, lurking in the woods or concealed in the snow.
7	Ancient Ruins of Angmar	The travellers come upon an ancient ruined keep that dates back to the days of Angmar. It's intact enough to offer shelter from the cold, but evil yet sleeps in those old stones.
8	Chance-meeting	In this empty land there are no other travellers – and yet the heroes spy someone moving in the distance. Is it one of the Lossoth? A messenger? Aya of the Unwilling (page XX)? Or a shadow of the past, a ghost against the snow.
9	Shadow of the Hunters	The heroes see a pack of hunters (see page 39) pursuing them. How do the characters deal with this threat? Hide? Turn and fight? Or press on and hope to outdistance their pursuers?
10	Wonder of the North	A strange sight unknown in the southlands – a huge elk, perhaps, a glacier glittering in the sunlight, or a river of churning ice. One character in the Company recovers 1 Hope.
	A light in the North	The clouds part for a brief moment, and a light shines from the far west – it is the light of Eärendil, the Flammifer of Westernesse! The Valar have not turned their faces from Middle-earth. All heroes may reduce their Shadow by 2.

THE HUNTERS

Evil folk — descendants of the Men of Angmar for the most part, but they have intermarried with some Lossoth — dwell in the hills. For now, they permit the Lossoth to pass, but attack other travellers. The Player-heroes risk being attacked on their journey unless they are dressed Snowman-fashion, or have the shell amulet once carried by Déor. These hunters stalk the heroes, using their snowshoes and bone-edged skates to stay out of reach and conserve their energy, waiting until their prey runs into difficulty before striking.

If the characters have the shell amulet, they may attempt to interact with the hunters, and convince them to guide them to Sennas Gaer. The hunters have already been contacted by Snava, and believe that the Witch-king is returning. If the characters have the shell amulet, the hunters mistake them for fellow servants of Sauron.

In case a fight should break out, use the **Lossoth Hunters** statistics on page 39. There are two Hunters for each Player-hero.

BURNT OFFERINGS

As they travel, the heroes find the remains of a bonfire. There are few trees in this part of the world, so clearly someone went to great trouble to drag these heavy logs down from the hills and build them into a pyre. Sifting through the ashes, the characters find fragments of burnt bone, including a human skull. This is all that remains of an offering to the Hill of Fear; some of the Lossoth have fallen back into the worship of the Dark Lord. The encounter is worth 2 points of Shadow (Dread).

Should the characters succumb to exhaustion on their journey, this is the fate that awaits them.

THE HILL OF FEAR

At the halfway point of their trek across the ice, the heroes see the Hill of Fear in the distance. It is almost as they have seen it in their dreams — a dark stain on the horizon, a fixed point like an axel around which the world revolves. The one difference is that it is not quite so dark — in their dreams, the sides of the Hill are black as though scorched, but now there is a dusting of snow on its flanks, brushing it with whiteness. It is as though some internal heat has diminished — or maybe it is returning, awakening like the fires of Mount Doom.

ORCS!

If your group includes several doughty warriors and sword-wielding heroes who take particular delight in head-cleaving and orc-chopping, then the villainous Orc Snava might have sent word to the Orcs of Mount Gundabad to keep watch for intruders from the south. In this case, the hills are thronged with watchful — and hungry — Orcs who need slaying. These Orcs are led by an **Orc-chieftain** named Gorgol, who wields a mighty axe taken from the tombs of the Dwarf-kings in Gundabad.

Alternatively, if Hultmar Manyhanded is still alive, then he would gladly take revenge on the thieves who robbed him of his Dwarven prisoners.

The sight of the Hill becomes maddening. Everything is the same, the snowy earth mirrored by the frozen white seas and the white clouds above, and that dark hill is the only solid shape, the only colour, the only real thing. The characters traipse across the snow towards it until, exhausted, they must make camp.

The next day, the Hill is no closer. It seems to move away from the travellers. Sometimes it recedes into the distance, as if it is moving away from them; at other times, the characters' path brings them into some dip in the terrain or there is a flurry of snow that blocks their view for a moment, and when they can see clearly again, the Hill is now off to one side, as if the characters have gone in the wrong direction. No matter how the characters struggle, they cannot reach the Hill.

There are two exceptions to this unnatural defence.

- **A MAGICAL SUCCESS:** If the characters have some way of obtaining a magical **EXPLORE** success, they can penetrate the defences of the Hill of Fear and find their way to the Witch-king's Road (go to page 103).
- **THROUGH SENNAS GAER:** The house of Sennas Gaer conceals a secret route to the Hill. If the characters have no other way to make progress, they must turn to Sennas Gaer. If the heroes are unaware of its existence, they happen upon the ruins of the house after an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate the Hill's defences.

PART 3: SENNAS GAER

In the early part of the Third Age of the World, the Witch-king founded the kingdom of Angmar, in the shadow of the mountains. There, he taught his followers the worship of evil powers, revealing to them that the Dark Lord was the one true god in Middle-earth, that he had long ago claimed dominion over all Mortal Men, and that he alone could grant eternal life.

Now, there was one Man of Angmar who proved especially worthy of the Witch-king's tutelage. He learned well, and served loyally, and was in turn rewarded with wealth and power and the secrets of sorcery. To him were given many things — dominion over the wide lands of the north, and care of the sacred Hill of Fear, and a magic ring that extended his life, so that he lived on and on even as his sons and his sons' sons grew old and died.

And yet, when the war came, the lord of the house rode away south with all his knights, and there he was mortally wounded in battle. He fled the field and returned to Sennas Gaer, and there — for all his power, for all the gifts of the Witch-king, for all his magic — he shared the same doom as all mortals, and died.

Angmar fell, and the castle was abandoned. It fell into ruin; the Lossoth shunned the place, believing it to be haunted.

Then from the east came a stranger, and she took the ruins of the castle as her home for a few centuries. Her name is Aya; she is an Elf, but not of any of the Elf-kindreds commonly encountered in the west of Middle-earth. She comes from a branch of Elf-kind who never saw the light of the Blessed Realm, and instead hid from the messengers of the Valar. They are a secretive and strange folk, dwellers in hidden glades and caves, rarely encountering the other folk of Middle-earth. They delight in shadow and twilight, and see little point in speaking to others. While they took no part in the wars between the Dark Lord and the other Elves of old, still they were hated by Sauron and his followers, and so they have been hunted and tormented. Some, it is said, have even turned to worship of the dark, but such tales may be lies spread by Sauron.

Few of these curious Elves remain in the Third Age, and none west of the Misty Mountains. It is virtually certain that none of the Player-heroes have met an Elf of Aya's kind before.

Aya of the Unwilling

Aya may be among the last of her kind in Middle-earth. Most of her kindred fell prey to misfortune, or were hunted by the servants of Mordor, or have so faded away that they are quite invisible to the eyes of mortals. She has been alone with only birds and beasts and the occasional mortal for company for many, many years; to her, all the world is like a passing stream, and she is all that remains timeless. The Elf-havens of Rivendell, Lórien and Mithlond are preserved, frozen in time, but Aya has no such refuge. She sees only the changing world.

She came to Sennas Gaer seven hundred years ago, more than three centuries after the defeat of the Witch-king. Back then, the Hill of Fear was dormant, but the place still fascinated her. As one of the Eldar, Aya does not share in death, the Doom assigned to mortals when the world was made. Amon Guruthos is the Hill of the Fear of Death, and in its presence even the undying can taste the terror reserved for mortals.

Aya is a strange, fey creature. In temperament she is more like an Ent or child than some wise Elf-prince like Elrond; she is curious about the world, but in a detached, almost alien manner. She considers herself neutral in the great struggle between the Free Folk and the Shadow, and would hide from the princes of the Noldor as swiftly as she might from the forces of Sauron.

To Aya, the Player-heroes are a novelty, an entertainment. She is fascinated by these strangers; much as a bored child might put a fallen fledgling bird back in a nest, she desires to keep the characters away from the Hill. At times, her mask slips, revealing her own loneliness and confusion — she still does not know her place in the world.

OCCUPATION: Hermit

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: Wary, Keen-eyed

The Ruined Castle

The wild Elf watches the approaching characters from a vantage point in the rubble of the castle, hidden from sight. An **AWARENESS** roll warns the characters they are being watched, but it takes an extraordinary success to spot the white-clad figure of Aya.

Exploring the ruined castle, the characters find three things of note — first, there are some weathered statues and mosaics in the style of the Men of Westernesse; stern lords staring out of stone, one hand upraised in a gesture of blessing, the other laid upon sword or axe. One statue in particular has endured better than the rest, but that is not a wholesome sight. The carven face is cruel and sneering, with a mocking smile twisting about the lips. Instead of a gesture of blessing, the outstretched hand clutches into a fist, and he is depicted wearing a jewelled ring. On the plinth is the name GURGOLWEN; beneath, in much smaller letters, is another inscription, mostly illegible, but it seems to be a list of the names of the sons, grandsons and possibly great- and great-great- grandsons of this Gurgolwen. Alternatively, maybe 'Gurgolwen' is a title that was passed down through many generations.

Second, in the courtyard, there is a huge door in the ground. A ramp — mostly choked with snow — leads down to the door, which is wide enough for two horses to ride abreast down into whatever underground chamber it guards. The door is bound in iron, and does not move no matter how the characters push or hew at it. It cannot be opened, and must be sealed magically. This is the door to the Witch-king's road (page 103). Aya laid a spell on it to keep it closed, and it only opens with her permission.

Third, the characters find a curious structure amid the ruins of the castle — a cottage made with salvaged stone from fallen buildings. Piled outside the front door are furs and other offerings from the Lossoth. This is the house of the Elf Aya.

Inside the Cottage

Inside is a small but comfortable house of several rooms. A fire burns merrily in the grate, stew bubbles in the pot, and the house inside is warm and cosy. It's weirdly out of place, like finding a Hobbit-hole in the middle of the Misty Mountains.

What do the characters do? Aya's initial attitude to them is determined by their actions. Do they make themselves at home? Loot the place for supplies? Assume that it's some deceit of the Enemy? Make an offering, like the Lossoth?

MEETING AYA

Aya emerges from hiding once she is assured that the Player-heroes are not dangerous (if she fears they are dangerous, then she waits until they are asleep, then sneaks out to put a knife to the throat of their Look-out). Almost shyly, she welcomes the characters to her home. She is fond of Mortal Men, wary of Dwarves, fearful and nervous in the presence of Elves of Lindon or Rivendell (Wood-Elves of Mirkwood are more like her, and she is comfortable in their presence). Hobbits amuse her, but she has not seen their kind in many years — she watched Hobbits when they dwelt in the Gladden Fields, many centuries ago.

To the Player-heroes, Aya might seem almost ghostly — a pale Woman in a white gown, dark-haired, with eyes like distant stars. In conversation, she is strange and hesitant, for she rarely converses with others, and she mixes in words from strange tongues or the speech of bird and beast, and makes references to people and places from long ago and far away.

If asked for her own story, Aya shrugs and says she has wandered alone for a long time. She took no part in the Wars of Elves in drowned Beleriand, and takes no part in the Wars of Men in Eriador. No-one is on her side, and she is on no-one's side.

She found this place centuries ago, when it was only ruins, and made her home here for a little while. There is a power in the Hill nearby that fascinates her. It is Death, and Death is something the Elves cannot know. She has watched the world change and fade over and over; there is nothing that is not marred, nothing that is not broken and dying, except for Elven-kind.

She has little knowledge of present-day Middle-earth beyond the Forodwaith. She has heard of the 'lands of the sons of Eärendil', but has no knowledge of any other mortal kingdoms, and believes that the other Elves have mostly fled across the sea. She has never heard of newer lands like Rohan or Dale, and is unaware of the fall of Arnor. Such matters hold no interest for her.

Aya asks the characters what they seek here, and why.

- If they say they're here to destroy the Hill of Fear, she laughs. Other heroes have tried and failed, and have either fled in terror or perished in the dark. Of course the characters can throw their lives away if they wish, but it's like trying to turn back the tide by throwing pebbles into the water. The quest is folly.
- If they say they're trying to help the Lossoth, then Aya shrugs. The Lossoth who make offerings and worship the dark do not fear the Hill. Let the other mortals bow to Sauron and believe that he will save them from death.

If the characters continue to ask about the Hill of Fear, or threaten to leave Aya's home, then she asks them to stay the night, promising to provide them with hot food and an evening of rest and entertainment. She will open the way to the Hill of Fear in the morning.

A successful **INSIGHT** roll can tell that Aya is not simply lonely, but has been alone so long that she no longer sees others as thinking beings like her. It is a form of solipsism; she sees the rest of the world as a single entity, all not-Aya, and has lost the ability to connect with others.

OUT OF THE WAY, ANNOYING ELF!

Some Player-heroes may grow impatient with Aya's strange ways, or suspect her of being in league with their enemies. If they force the issue, then Aya scornfully tells them that she will open the way to the Hill of Fear for them, so they may go to their doom quickly, and carry her curse with them. If they attack, she flees, vanishing into the mountains of Angmar, and the characters may force the trapdoor open. The door now opens easily.

The Evening Feast

Aya closes the shutters over the windows, blocking out the light of the low winter sun. She serves the heroes a meal of venison and vegetables, and from some unlikely cellar she produces wine and honey. As they eat, she sings songs in an archaic form of Elvish that make the heroes feel like they sit beneath strange stars, and the world around them is young and fair.

Aya asks the characters to return the favour by entertaining her with a story or song. How do the Player-heroes respond, and which story or song does each one tell? If they remain silent, that too is a choice — what do they say to their host to explain their silence?

Aya is visibly entranced by whichever Player-hero has the best **RIDDLE** or **SONG** result, or if one of the characters tells a tale that's especially relevant (she makes *Aya's Offer* to that character during the night).

SOLACE FOR AYA

Player-heroes who take pity on the troubled Elf might wish for her to find a better fate than hiding here until the world falls utterly under the shadow. Healing Aya's wounded soul is beyond the power of any of them, but they could direct her to those who could help.

Some possibilities follow:

- **THE HAVENS:** Aya's folk rejected the journey west to the Undying Lands, and hid from the emissaries of the Valar when the world was young. She does not know that ships are still sailing from the Grey Havens, and assumes that there is no place for her on such a ship — her fate is bound to Middle-earth forever. However, if a Player-hero (especially an Elf of Lindon) speaks to Círdan on her behalf, then a place could be found for her.
- **GANDALF:** The Grey Pilgrim has the Ring of Fire, and can kindle flames in the hearts of the hopeless. Gandalf could likely convince Aya to take a side in the struggle between the Enemy and the Free Folk, giving her new purpose — although joining the fight against Sauron would likely result ultimately in Aya's destruction.
- **TOM BOMBADIL:** Tom's attitude is quite like Aya's, although he is a much merrier and more contented fellow. Aya knows Tom of old as Iarwain Ben-Adar, although she does not know that he still walks the woods of Middle-earth. If told of him and his house, she is astounded and fascinated. A few years' rest and healing in the company of Tom and Lady Goldberry, and Aya might be a changed and renewed Elf, and the characters might meet her laughing and dancing in the woods of the Shire in the spring.

Aya rejects any suggestion of going to Rivendell or Lórien — she will take no part in the wars of the High Elves.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST

In the midst of this strange feast, there is the sound of footsteps, with one foot dragging, then comes a knock at the door. Aya frowns and says, *"Ah, the wretch has returned. Heed me — there shall be no violence under my roof, or my curse shall fall upon thee! I take no side; I have no enemy."* She bids one of the characters to open the door.

Waiting on the doorstep is a figure wrapped in a heavy cloak, encrusted with snow, one hand raised against the wan sunlight, the other grasping a strangely-carved staff. The figure is neither Man nor Elf, but an Orc. This is Snava, the spy who ordained the attack on Flonar's camp, who commanded Déor's death, and who woke the Hill of Fear. He is a spy from Minas Morgul, an Orc-messenger steeped in sorcery and evil cunning. He snarls in alarm at the sight of the Player-heroes.

What do the characters do? Strike him down or welcome him in?

- **ATTACKING SNAVA:** The Orc is a dangerous foe, even when fatigued from a long journey, and he knows how to call on the evil spirits of the Hill of Fear. If attacked, Snava turns and flees, running into the wilderness towards the Hill of Fear where the characters cannot follow. Aya is infuriated by the characters' abuse of her hospitality, and curses the character who struck the first blow. Aya's curse has power — for the rest of the character's life, any Company they are part of *loses (1d)* in all Councils.
- **INVITING THE ORC IN:** Snava limps into the cottage and takes a seat in the corner, glaring suspiciously at the heroes around him. *"Telling tales, are we? Stories by the firelight? Well, I've a tale for you, and it's the only one that's true. But I'll wait my turn. You get your stories, and mine comes last."*

If asked why an Orc is welcome under her roof, Aya explains that Snava has been here before. *"He first passed this way a few years ago, looking for Amon Guruthos. I put an arrow in his leg when I saw him — Orcs have hunted me in the past. But he begged me to spare him, and I did. I have no enemies. I do not judge."* Still, she remains wary of Snava, and does not get within reach of his knife.

If any of the Player-heroes mention the sword Estelang, then Snava's eyes glitter with interest.

THE ORC'S TALE

Once all the characters have spoken, Snava clears his throat with a foul noise. He grins, clearly enjoying this rare opportunity to torment the heroes.

"I don't have pretty words like you, and my story ain't about long-agos and never-wases. Listen well — the Great Eye is looking north across the River. He's got the filthy Tarks to deal with first, but when He's done with them, He'll come for you, and oh, won't that be a glorious day. We'll finish what Angmar started, mark my words, and smash your little towns. Drive the Elves into the Sea and burn all their pretty ships. All the mountains are teeming with our lot — the mountain-maggots ain't much good, but we've got a hundred of 'em for every one of you."

"And there are other things, too, older things, that we'll whip up. Yon hill for one — He made it in the first war, and I woke it up. Fed it, too — it likes a bit of meat, and there are plenty of hungry ones below who smelled the blood. There are things not even the Elves know, and oh, they'll be ready when the big push comes. They'll be ready, my friends — and you'll all be dead. The last war is coming, and you're going to lose. Want my advice? Bow to Him. Bow before the Dark Throne, bow before Lugbúrz, and maybe the Eye will look upon you with pity. Elseways…" He draws his finger across his throat and laughs.

If asked about the Hill of Fear, then Snava laughs. *"No harm in telling you. No harm in telling. It's your ending, that's what's down there. The end of everything. I've seen it. I've seen it with my own eyes, my friends. I came back to do the rites and open more of the gates, but killing me won't stop it. It can't be stopped now. His power is rising, and your time is over."*

The one thing that can give Snava pause is the sight of the sword Estelang. The Orc flinches, then laughs. *"So you've dug up some old ironmongery. I've heard tell of that blade. Doesn't matter. Know what happened to the last Man who brought that sword here? He went mad and ran away. And everyone who came with him died. He abandoned them to die down in the dark, or so the story goes."*

EVENTS IN THE NIGHT

A night spent with such a diverse group of guests under the same roof isn't likely to be uneventful — in particular, two things may come to pass.

SNAVA STEALS THE SWORD: If the Orc Snava sees that a Player-hero carries the sword Estelang, he could creep into the bedroom of the swordbearer and try to steal it. The character (or the Look-out, if the heroes set a watch) gets an **AWARENESS** roll to spot the sneaky Orc; if spotted, Snava makes a lunge for the sword. If he gets away with the blade, he intends to throw it into the bottomless well atop the Hill of Fear (page 106).

If Snava has no opportunity to steal the sword, then he stalks the Player-heroes as they travel the Witch-king's Road (page 103). Optionally, he might call upon the Evil Men who dwell nearby, invoking their old loyalty to Angmar so they aid him in pursuing the heroes.

AYA'S OFFER: If any of the mortal Player-heroes have attracted Aya's attention, and the characters have not suggested a way for her to find solace (see page 99), then the Elf approaches them in private, almost shyly. *"The Orc is right. I fear there can*

be no escape from the Shadow, and all efforts to fight it are in vain. But neither will I give in. I will find what joy I may, in the time that is left to me, however long or short that is. You could come with me. I have this." She holds up a jewelled ring — the same ring the characters saw on the statue outside, the ring of Gurgolwen. *"This will not let you escape the doom of mortals, but it will delay it a little while. Take it, and we shall flee together, and hide until the end."*

Aya's offer is genuine — she no longer wishes to reside here, and believes that struggling against the Shadow is futile. The ring, too, is a genuine magical item.

Accepting Aya's offer immediately means the chosen character leaves the campaign. However, a character could promise to return to Aya after the Quest of Amon Guruthos, or suggest one of the options under Solace for Aya (page 99).

Opening the Way

The next morning, if the heroes are still set on this path, then Aya will open the door in the heart of the ruin of Sennas Gaer. This, she explains, is the Witch-king's Road, a ceremonial path that runs underground part of the way to the Hill of Fear. Down this road in days of old rode the Witch-king of Angmar and his dark priests and sorcerers; down this road came the doom of the North Kingdom. This is the only road that can reach the Hill.

This is a road she cannot follow.

Aya gestures, and the great iron-bound doors grind open. The pale sun does not illuminate the darkness beyond. The characters must light torches and bring their own light with them as they walk in dark places.

If Snava is still alive, then the Orc waits until the Company have entered the dark tunnel, then he silently pads after them, bent on turning the magic of Amon Guruthos against them…

THE RING OF GURGOLWEN

While this ring has been sullied by the hand of Sauron, who took it from the workshops of the Jewelsmiths in Hollin of old, it is still a potent item. It has the Blessings of AWE and CRAFT, and also prolongs the wearer's life indefinitely, though the joy of life fades — while the ring is in their possession, the wearer cannot pick the *Heal Scars* undertaking during Yule (see *The One Ring*, page 137).

SNAVA THE ORC
Cunning, Wary

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL	ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
6	48	2	6	+4	4

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Great Spear 3 (5/16, Pierce)

FELL ABILITIES: ***Dreadful Spells***. Spend 1 Hate to make one Player-hero gain 3 Shadow points (Sorcery). Targets who fail their Shadow test or who are Miserable are assaulted by a bodiless wight, and for the rest of the fight they *lose (1d)* on all rolls.

Snake-like Speed. When targeted by an attack, spend 1 Hate to make the attack roll *Ill-favoured*.

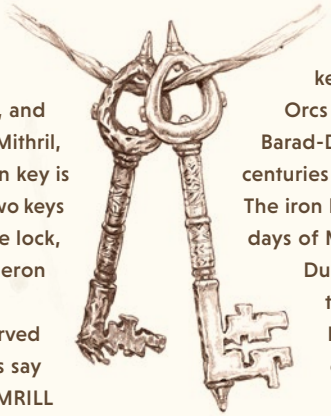
Yell of Triumph. Spend 1 Hate to restore 1 Hate to all other Orcs and Undead in the fight.

SNAVA'S KEYS

Around Snava's neck is a strip of leather, and strung on it are two keys. One is made of Mithril, the other of iron, and the end of the iron key is damaged, as if hacked free in haste. The two keys are plainly identical, made to fit the same lock, and both have runes in the mode of Daeron carved into the barrel.

The runes differ between the keys. Carved into the barrel of the iron key, the runes say in the Common Tongue "17TH PILLAR DIMRILL STAIR"; the Mithril key also bears runes, but these are in the secret tongue of the Dwarves, and only a Dwarf can read the message "CURSED BE HE WHO MISUSES ME".

These keys both fit a secret lock hidden in the Dimrill Pass, which opens a secret door into Moria. The Mithril key is the original, and was captured by the Orcs long ago and brought by secret ways to Barad-Dûr, where it was entrusted to Snava many centuries later for the furtherance of his evil mission. The iron key is a copy made by Dwarves in the last days of Moria when the city was under assault by Durin's Bane; refugees fleeing Khazad-Dûm took it with them as they escaped across Eriador (this key was held in the archives of the Blue Mountains, and was carried by Flonar – see page 76).



Now, should the Player-heroes come into possession of any of the two keys, they would command a secret route into the forbidden city... If the heroes capture Snava, he might trade the keys for his life – and then try to turn the power of the Hill against them.

PART 4: AMON GURUTHOS

When the black breath blows
and death's shadow grows
and all lights pass…

RUMOUR

"I've dreamed of this dark hill for a while now. Maybe I dreamed of it when I was young, once or twice, but these last few years, it's haunted my dreams every night. It's strange to be scared of a hill, isn't it? A hill can't hurt you. Hills are just… there.

I think that's why it scares me, somehow. It's there, and it's always been there, and it will always be there. And I won't. It gets into your head and reminds you that you're… fleeting. The child who dreamed of that hill is gone like the winds of spring, and the Man who dreams of it now grows old and tired, and the hill's unchanged. It's like it's… no, that's a foolish thought.

Hills don't eat people."

OLD LORE

"Of old, the Great Enemy Morgoth raised his fortress in the uttermost north, and declared that all Middle-earth was his dominion. He put forth his power to claim the land. The Hill of Amon Guruthos rose like a dark wave, a bastion of his malice, and there of old the fathers of the fathers of Men held dark rites in worship of the Enemy.

Heroes tried to put an end to the malice of the Hill of Fear, but none succeeded. At times, its power faded and the Hill withdrew from the minds of Men; but that was temporary, the shadow returned and the Hill troubled the world once more.

In later years, the Hill of Fear was a stronghold of Angmar, and the Witch-king presided over the rites. From the hilltop, he called up evil spirits, and sent them to trouble the sleep of the North Kingdoms. After the defeat of the Witch-king, it is said that warriors from the House of Elrond entered the hill and found it deserted, and so it must be hoped that an end has come to this malice of Morgoth."

BACKGROUND

The Hill of Fear was made as a tool of domination, a way for Morgoth — and, in latter years, his acolytes and followers — to rule over the minds of mortals. The Elves are wise, for in their tongue this place is Amon Guruthos, the Hill of the Shadow of Death. It is a monument to remind mortals that they shall inevitably die. Once this horror was impressed on

mortals, it was easy for Morgoth to deceive them with promises of eternal life and woo them to his service.

Morgoth conjured this utter terror by means of a magic mirror that reflects only the unknowable, eternal void beyond Creation, the infinite darkness untouched by the light of the One. From this void, the Witch-king would later call forth the spirits now known as the Barrow-wights, and other evils beside.

LOCATIONS

1. SENNAS GAER

The ruins of Sennas Gaer. This fortress never saw battle, and its once-formidable defences were never tested by any foe except the harsh weather. Sennas Gaer had a dozen great hearths and a host of chimneys to ward off the bitter cold, but still the wind found its way in.

The Elf Aya dwells in her little cottage amid the ruins. A dark door in the cellars leads to the Witch-king's Road; Aya laid a spell on it to keep it closed, and it can only be opened with her permission — although there are powers in this land that could overcome Aya's spell, if they put their strength behind the counter-magic.

2. THE WITCH-KING'S ROAD

A ceremonial passage underground. The corridor is wide enough for two horses to ride abreast, and tall enough even for a tall Númenórean to ride without fear. There are no light sources in the tunnel. When the sorcerers and princes of Angmar rode this path to attend rites at the Hill of Fear, it was part of the ritual that they would ride through utter darkness, giving them a glimpse of oblivion. Even though many years have passed, something of their fear remains:

> Player-heroes travelling the Road gain 2 points of Shadow (Dread).

While the Road is mostly straight, it turns sharply twice. The passage continues a short distance in each case, ending in a spiked pit each time (a Grievous Fall, as per *The One Ring* page 134). This was a defence against intruders, for only those who had been initiated into the secret of the Road would know when to turn aside.

With torches, the characters could easily avoid this simple trap. However, they are in a place of great malice; as they make their way along the road, there's a sudden gust of icy wind that threatens to extinguish all the Company's torches.

> All characters bearing a torch must make a **CRAFT** or **AWARENESS** roll to react in time to protect their guttering flames. If all torchbearers fail, the Company are plunged into darkness and must make **EXPLORE** rolls to find their way safely along the road.

3. PRISON

A side passageway leads to a small complex of cells. Of old, this was a dungeon where condemned prisoners were held before they were sacrificed in blasphemous rites atop Amon Guruthos. Today, it's the lair of a pair of Cave-trolls. Player-heroes sneaking down the Witch-king's Road can smell the stench of the lurking Trolls with an **AWARENESS** roll, and creep past with a **STEALTH** roll. The Stealth roll is made *losing (1d)* if the characters are in darkness.

The Trolls, Gnaw and Grasp, have dwelt here for countless years, preying on the Lossoth and the animals of the Forodwaith. Being creatures of evil, the Trolls aren't affected by the magic of the Hill of Fear, and they are free to roam the area, catching their prey by night in the wilds.

> Gnaw and Grasp are two **Cave-troll Slinkers** (see *The One Ring*, page 152). Gnaw has an instinctive connection to the Hill of Fear, and can draw strength from it — the Troll's attacks against mortals are *Favoured*.

4. THE SILENT WATCHERS

Two statues flank the exit from the Witch-king's road. These statues depict eerie vulture-headed figures, each with three heads facing in different directions. There is power in these statues, and it takes a great effort of will to push through their dark gaze. Pushing past the statues causes all Player-heroes to gain 3 points of Shadow (Dread). If a character fails the Shadow test, they can still crawl across the threshold, agonisingly forcing their leaden limbs forward, inch by inch, dragging their reluctant frames until they're past the dreadful gaze. All that costs several long minutes of effort — more than enough time for the Trolls to scent the intruders, or for Snava to find the heroes while they're helpless.

SNAVA'S MEDDLING

If Snava is stalking the Player-heroes, then he might ambush them in the dark — or alert the Trolls in the prison to their presence.

5. IMPASSABLE REGION

This line marks the closest that the Player-heroes can approach the Hill of Fear without taking the Witch-king's road. The magic of the Hill is almost impossible to overcome — a Wizard or an Elf-lord in full wrath might be able to break through the sorcerous barrier and open the way, as can a Player-hero with a suitable Magical Success. The magic also only works on those who have never set foot on the Hill; after the Player-heroes reach the Hill via the Witch-king's Road, they can return freely (not that they are likely to have any reason to come back, one way or another, once the quest is done).

6. THE DESOLATION

The empty region around the Hill of Fear. There is no shelter, no cover, nothing between the Player-heroes and that awful dark tor. As they approach, it seems to grow taller, towering over them like a dark wave. Ask each Player-hero to describe what their character secretly fears will be found beneath the Hill.

THE WORM-WIGHT

Call for an AWARENESS roll. Those who succeed feel the earth shake, as if something huge was moving just beneath the frozen ground — for something huge *is* moving beneath the frozen ground. The Worm-wight is abroad (see page 110).

7. THE SPIRAL PATH

This narrow path leads from the Witch-king's Road to the top of the Hill of Fear. The sides of the hill are steep and hard to climb (requiring an ATHLETICS roll to avoid slipping back), so this road is the only safe way up. More statues like the Silent Watchers line the path, although these lesser statues do not have the same awful power as the ones at the Witch-king's Road.

8. HOUSES OF THE PRIESTS

In the days of Angmar, priests dwelt in these houses. Little remains save a few walls with hollow windows, and if the characters sometimes glimpse pale, hateful faces staring at them from those empty windows, then it is surely their imagination, for there is nothing here but ruins.

Amidst those fallen stones is a hole in the ground, a borehole about two feet wide. It might be a well, but it slants at an angle into the hillside, and a foul reek rises from it. This hole was caused by the passage of the Worm-wight (page 110), and leads down to the Worm-lair (13). The tunnel widens in places and narrows in others; a Hobbit or small Dwarf could easily sneak down, but a large Man would be hard pressed to squeeze through without getting stuck or causing a cave-in.

9. THE TEMPLE RUINS

Like the houses of the priests below, this temple has fallen into ruin — and that is a blessing, for even these shattered remains have a lingering sense of malice that chills the blood. Broken carvings and fallen statues hint at dreadful images; the remains of the temple are like the hand of a skeletal giant, reaching out of the grave.

All characters entering the temple precinct gain 3 Shadow Points (Sorcery).

Worse, at the heart of the temple is an altar, wrought of some reddish stone and unmarked by the passing ages. Carvings on its side depict a dark lord on a dark throne; on his head is a heavy crown of iron studded with gemstones, and his hand reaches out to seize the world.

> Any character who gained any Shadow points on entering the temple cannot help but cry out 'Hail, Dark King, Master of Life and Death'.

COMMANDING THE SPIRITS

Snava can call upon the power of the Hill of Fear from this altar, calling bodiless spirits out of the well.

AMON GURUTHOS
1
2
3
4
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10. THE DARK WELL

In front of the altar is a stone-lined well, a pit that descends right into the heart of the Hill of Fear. The characters cannot see anything at the bottom of the well; it vanishes into the consuming dark. The sides of the well are carved from solid rock, without visible joints or mortar, as if the stone melted and flowed. It is possible to climb down the well, but it's difficult — all rolls *lose (1d)*.

A character who falls into the well almost certainly perishes (a Grievous Fall that proves fatal if it results in the character becoming Wounded or Dying — see page 134 of *The One Ring*), although they might be lucky enough to catch themselves on the lip of location 16 as they plummet.

Any characters who gain 2 or more Shadow points when entering the temple experience a strange and incapacitating vision. They perceive that any companions who did not gain Shadow points here have vanished. The world seems to whirl around the Hill of Fear, the heavens pinwheeling. Stones drag themselves across the earth and pile themselves up, the temple springing back into existence as it was in the dreadful days of Angmar. The Silent Watchers cry out in triumph with voices like brass trumpets, and the doors of the Witch-king's Road open. The characters see a procession of horsemen approaching the Hill; stern knights and lords of Angmar, flanked by armoured Trolls, and at their head is a fearsome horseman wearing a fiery crown. To the character who did not gain Shadow, it appears that their companions have frozen in place, eyes fixed open.

This is a memory or vision of the Witch-king of Angmar. To break free, the characters must succeed at a Skill Endeavour with a Resistance equal to the total number of Shadow Points accrued in the temple. Characters in the vision can only use WISDOM to resist; characters who escaped the spell might use ENHEARTEN or HEALING to aid their companions, or LORE to understand their plight, or ATHLETICS to drag them away from the temple. The time limit for this endeavour is equal to the Resistance, so time is short.

If the Skill Endeavour fails, then in the vision the Witch-king reaches the temple, and speaks a word of command. The afflicted characters then hurl themselves into the well to their deaths.

11. DOOR OF NIGHT

A heavy stone blocks this passageway that leads into the heart of the Hill of Fear. The stone is almost flush with the surrounding arch, but it can be levered out from where it rests and then dragged away. There are ancient scrapes and marks on the stone that precisely match the blade of Estelang — the magic sword was used to prise the entrance open many centuries ago.

The air inside the Hill stinks of rotten stale air, mixed with a strange smell of ash. It's the smell of death.

12. BARROW CORRIDOR

This passageway winds around the inside of the hill. For the most part, it's tall and wide enough for the explorers to move without impediment, but in places the ceiling bulges or drops down, forcing the characters to crawl. Bags of bones — corpses laid here wrapped in reindeer-skins — lie along the floor, the entombed remnants of generations of priests. In some sections, the corpses are so thickly packed that they pave the corridor, and the characters must trample the dead to proceed.

All these corpses are **Hill-wights**, the remains inhabited by spirits, but they do not stir. Not yet. Not until called.

13. WORM-LAIR

A side tunnel, bored into the earth of the hill, leads up to a larger hollow. This is the lair of the Worm-wight (page 110), a wingless Dragon that once guarded the hill. It perished a thousand years ago, but its corpse is inhabited by a malign spirit that animates it. The lair of the worm is dust-dry, caked in dried ash like some ancient hearth. The chamber is roughly circular, with smaller bores leading off in different directions.

Before it died, the worm gathered the offerings and other treasures of the temple, and slept atop a bed of gold. This treasure is a Marvellous Hoard, but any items found there are doubtless cursed.

14. ANCIENT RUINS

The innermost tunnels within the Hill are strange indeed — it is as though the stone has been twisted or forced into shape rather than sculpted or built. No hand of Orc or Man or Elf built these passageways. More dead priests lie here entombed in niches along the corridor, but they are nothing more than empty black shrouds. No flesh nor bone are left in all but a few of these graves, and those remains that are present are not good to look upon. All intruders feel a crushing pressure as they draw closer to the heart of the Hill, as if the full weight of all the many tons of earth and stone above bears down on them. It seems that at any moment the tunnel might collapse and the heroes would join the long-dead in their graves, entombed alive in the dark places beneath the earth.

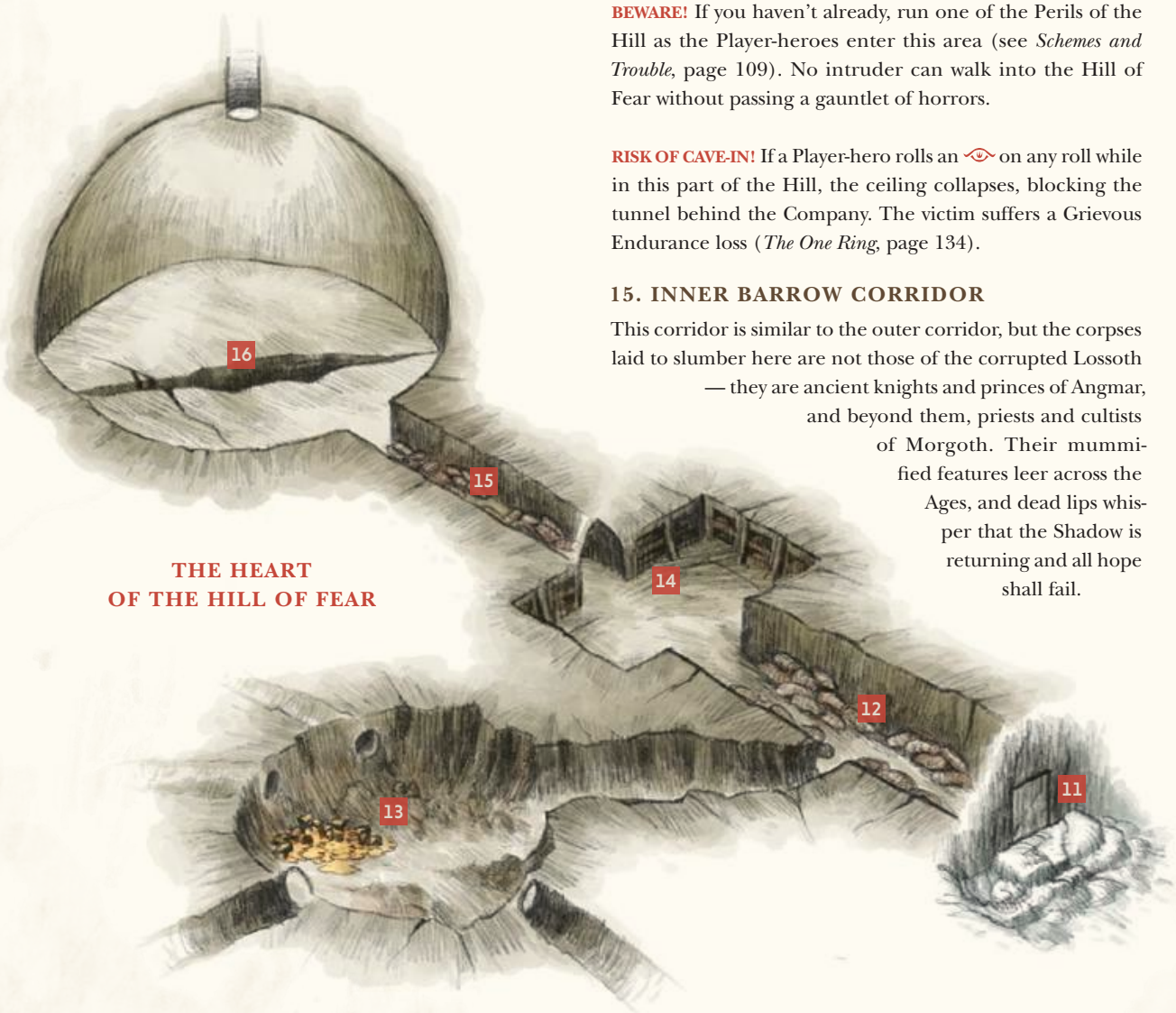
Ask each Player-hero individually if they wish to flee.

BEWARE! If you haven't already, run one of the Perils of the Hill as the Player-heroes enter this area (see *Schemes and Trouble*, page 109). No intruder can walk into the Hill of Fear without passing a gauntlet of horrors.

RISK OF CAVE-IN! If a Player-hero rolls an on any roll while in this part of the Hill, the ceiling collapses, blocking the tunnel behind the Company. The victim suffers a Grievous Endurance loss (*The One Ring*, page 134).

15. INNER BARROW CORRIDOR

This corridor is similar to the outer corridor, but the corpses laid to slumber here are not those of the corrupted Lossoth — they are ancient knights and princes of Angmar, and beyond them, priests and cultists of Morgoth. Their mummified features leer across the Ages, and dead lips whisper that the Shadow is returning and all hope shall fail.



THE HEART
OF THE HILL OF FEAR

16. THE PLACE BENEATH THE HILL

In the ceiling of this chamber is a circular opening — this is the bottom of the shaft that runs from the Temple (9).

At the heart of the Hill of Fear is a nothing. How the characters perceive it depends on who the characters are. Most Elves see only an empty chasm, a black pit that falls away into the depths. Those mighty Elves who have the light of Aman in their face (**WISDOM** 4+, or the Virtue Against the Unseen) have the keenness of otherworldly sight to see a wound in the world down there in the pit, a gap in Creation. This is a Gate, conjured by the Enemy in the elder days, a door through which evil spirits may enter the created world from the void beyond.

Mortals, though — Men, Hobbits, Dwarves — there, they see the shadow of death.

The sight of this dark place conjures terribly grim visions. All mortals see not only what they most fear for themselves, but for their home and kinfolk. A Hobbit might see their own death here in the desolate wilds of the far north, perishing alone beneath the Hill, but also see horrible things happening to their family back in the Shire. They might glimpse Orcs despoiling the Shire like the Orcs attacked Flonar's camp in Wonder of the Northern World, or see the Hobbit being imprisoned by Evil Men from Tharbad like the prisoners in *Not To Strike Without Need*. A Dwarf might see their kinfolk in the Blue Mountains being slaughtered, and then time grinding down all the works of their hands and mind; rust and rot consuming all the beauty of metal and stone.

In game terms, this causes 6 points of Shadow (Dread) gain in all mortals!

BOUTS OF MADNESS: Characters suffering a Bout of Madness here suddenly perceive their companions as enemies, and immediately attack them. This was the horrible fate that befell the companions of the Hero of old — unable to endure the despair, that company tore itself apart. The madness ends if the hero leaves (or is dragged away from) the Hill of Fear.

DEFEATING THE DARKNESS

How can the heroes overcome the Hill of Fear? Death is not a giant to be slain, nor a talisman to be broken. To break the magic of the Hill, they must find a way to overcome this fear. See *Destroying the Hill of Fear*, page 112.

SCHEMES AND TROUBLE

WAKING THE DEAD

Here, long ago, the Witch-king of Angmar stood as he called up the evil spirits and sent them to inhabit the barrows and graves of Tyrn Gorthad. From here, the Orc Snava called up the spirits that later brought disaster to the Dwarf assault on Rath Sereg (page 88). And from here, again, Snava can wake the wights that slumber beneath the Hill. If Snava is able to reach the temple atop the Hill, he can stir up all the dead laid in the Barrow Corridor (location 12). There are hundreds of wights down there in the dark, far more than the Player-heroes could hope to defeat. If the wights are roused, then the only chance for the characters is to break the power of the Hill before they are overcome by the host of the dead.

HILL-WIGHT
Hungry, Vengeful

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 5

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
20	1	6	–	2

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Ancient Sword 3 (5/16, Pierce)

FELL ABILITIES: *Denizen of the Dark*. All attack rolls are *Favoured* while in darkness.

Hate Sunlight. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is exposed to the full light of the sun.

Deathless. Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound; spend 1 Hate to reset to full Endurance when reduced to 0 Endurance. Ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a Bane weapon (Undead).

Heartless. Unaffected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

Thing of Terror. At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more creatures with this ability gain 3 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

Fell Presence. Spend 1 Hate when an opponent attempts a Combat Task to give that opponent a (–1d) penalty.

THE WORM-WIGHT

When the world was young and the Hill of Fear was first raised by the hand of the Enemy, a Dragon was sent forth from the dungeons of Angband to guard it. This worm came from one of the first broods of Dragons, a wingless serpent that slithered across the earth, poisoning it with its passage. Flames blazed in its belly. It grew and grew, wrapping itself around the Hill three times, and the heat of its body kept the slopes free of snow.

Centuries passed, then whole Ages, and still the worm maintained its vigil. Its master had commanded it to guard the Hill, and so it remained a sentry. It roused itself to devour the occasional treasure-hunter or would-be hero. At times, it slunk down to the Ice-bay and — melting a hole in the pack ice — swam in the cold waters to hunt seals and whales. Over time, the worm's fires grew dim. Snow cloaked the Hill of Fear, and the worm's bright scales turned grey and rotten. Its eyes no longer blazed, and it slept longer and longer until it died, silent and alone.

But there is a dark power in the Hill, and the worm kept faithful to its command even beyond death. The vile spirit that inhabited its living flesh now animated its rotting remains, and though it no longer had fire in its belly, its hatred of the living grew ever keener.

This thing, now, is the Worm-wight.

It has riddled the Hill with its tunnels, and can burrow anywhere in the landmark within a few heartbeats. If it senses intruders, the Worm-wight stalks them, waiting for the moment to strike. The Worm-wight prefers to wait until its prey are already trapped (by lesser wights, or by causing a small cave-in) then burrows in to attack them when they have no way to flee. If the heroes get close to the heart of the Hill, then the worm crawls down the central well to defend its charge.

WORM-WIGHT
Fierce, Vengeful

ATTRIBUTE LEVEL 10

ENDURANCE	MIGHT	HATE	PARRY	ARMOUR
120	3	10	—	5

COMBAT PROFICIENCIES: Bite 3 (6/204, Pierce), Tail 2 (10/12, Break Shield)

FELL ABILITIES: *Deathless*. Spend 1 Hate to cancel a Wound; spend 1 Hate to reset to full Endurance when reduced to 0 Endurance. Ineffective against Player-heroes wielding a Bane weapon (Undead).

Hate Sunlight. The creature loses 1 Hate at the start of each round it is exposed to the full light of the sun.

Heartless. Unaffected by the Intimidate Foe combat task, unless a Magical success is obtained.

Horrible Strength. If the creature scores a Piercing Blow, spend 1 Hate to make the target's Protection roll *Ill-favoured*.

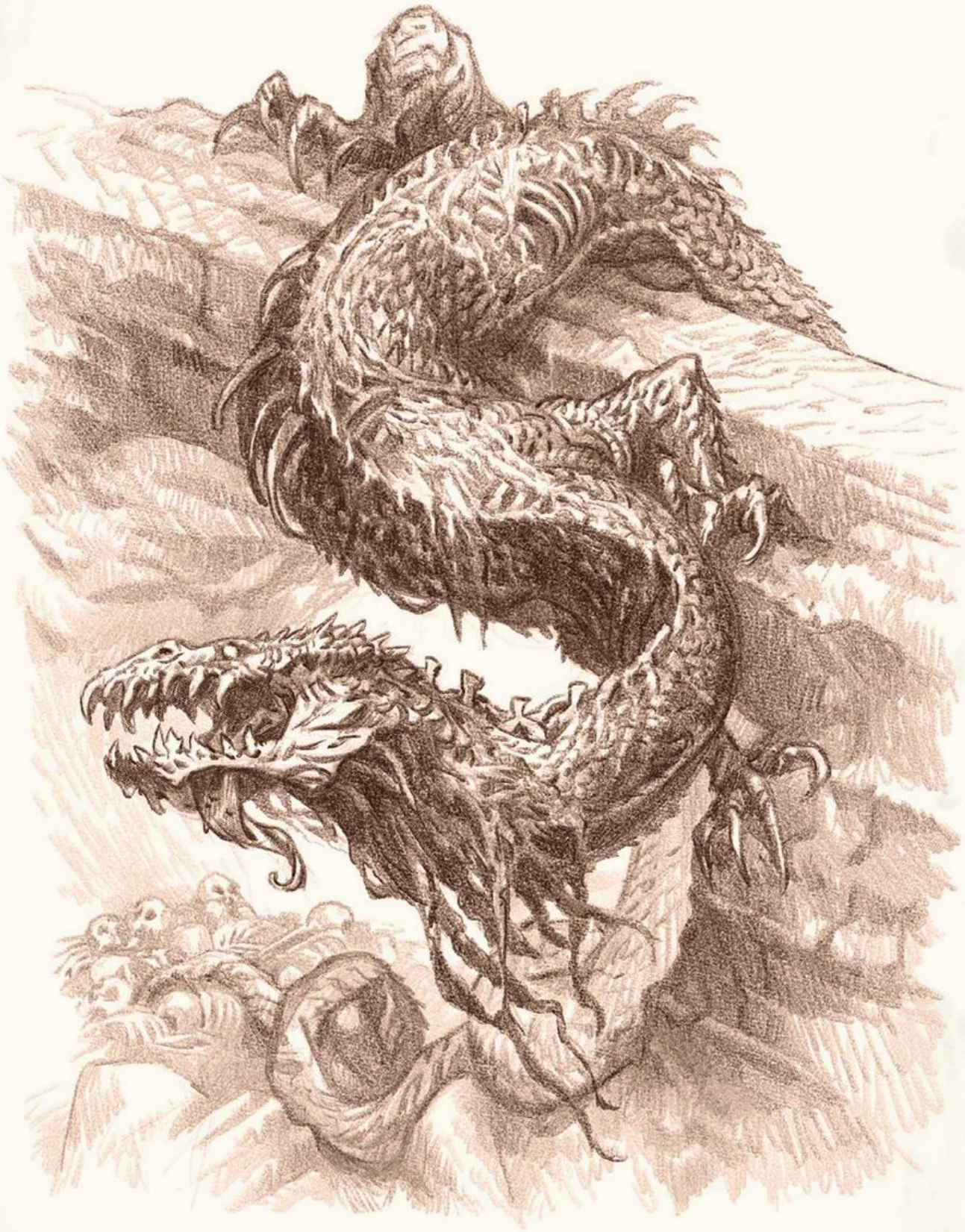
Thing of Terror. At the start of the first round of the battle all Player-heroes in sight of one or more creatures with this ability gain 4 Shadow points (Dread). Those who fail their Shadow test are daunted and cannot spend Hope for the rest of the fight.

Weak Spot. Player-heroes can attempt a special combat task against the creature while in any stance. The acting player makes a LORE or SCAN roll as the main action for the round: on a success, the Worm-wight *loses (1d)* on the next Protection roll, plus another *(1d)* for each Success icon (ᘔ) rolled.

PERILS OF THE HILL

As the heroes travel through the hill, unbalance them with moments of horror and disorientation. Some suggested perils:

- The ground shifts beneath one of the Player-heroes, the frozen earth suddenly becoming as yielding as rotten flesh. The hero slips and falls — dropping whatever item or weapon they're carrying.
- Howling spirits emerge from the darkness and assail the Company. These immaterial spirits cannot injure the living — but draw the attention of any nearby foes, and make any rolls *ill-favoured* until driven away by fire or magic.
- The ceiling of the tunnel partially caves in, inflicting a Grievous Endurance loss on one of the heroes (*The One Ring*, page 134).
- The hero with the heaviest burden of Shadow hears a voice from within the hill, promising that they'll find whatever they most desire — wealth, power, ancient lore, safety — if only they betray their companions and protect the Hill.
- The heroes all feel the sudden presence of an Eye. It's far away in the south, but it's searching for them, probing the darkness — and they know instinctively that if they were atop the Hill, it would see them instantly. All heroes must make a Shadow (Dread) test; those who fail gain 2 points of Shadow and are frozen in terror until the Eye passes on (or an enemy finds them and attacks, or a companion rallies them with Enhearten).



DESTROYING THE HILL OF FEAR

To defeat the magic of the Hill of Fear, the Company must overcome the fear of death as embodied by the dark Gate. It's up to the Player-heroes to conceive of a way to do this, and to the Loremaster to judge it fitting or otherwise.

Some suggestions follow:

COLLECTIVE DEFIANCE: The Hill's magic relies on division and fear; it conjures images of despair, and seeks to turn the heroes against one another by filling them with doubt and mistrust. Other fellowships of heroes failed and broke under the shadow of the Hill — but the Player-heroes are different! If they all hold together, supporting one another, they can drive away the darkness.

STRIKE IT WITH THE SWORD: The sword Estelang was made for this purpose — does it have enough magic to shatter the spells of the Enemy, if wielded with valour?

BRING DOWN THE HILL: The Hill of Fear is an unnatural place, a twisted aberration. That is not natural stonework back there. A cunning Dwarf could hew away the foundations and collapse the hill, choking the pit with the earth and rubble of the temple above.

WRESTLING THE WORM-WIGHT: The dead Dragon is the strongest of the Barrow-wights that troubled the North — could hurling it into the pit that spawned it destroy the Gate?

THE AID OF A PATRON: Perhaps it was the purpose of the heroes to open the way to the heart of the Hill, to trample a path for another to follow. When all seems lost, then Gandalf could arrive in the nick of time, or the voice of Tom Bombadil might somehow be heard on the wind, singing up a fair tune that blows away the darkness.

PRAYER FOR DELIVERANCE: *Gilthoniel, a Elbereth! Aiya elenion ancalima!* Ultimately, the Shadow cannot be defeated by heroes, no matter how courageous they may be. All they can do is resist to the limits of their strength, and put their trust in the Valar. Maybe slaying the Worm-wight and holding out against the other wights will be rewarded by a single star — the light of Eärendil! — shining through the gloom…

HEROIC SELF-SACRIFICE: A Player-hero might willingly hurl themselves into the pit, accepting that it is the hero's destiny to lay down their life for the benefit of others. That sacrifice ends the character's tale — but also closes the Gate and destroys the power of the Hill.

PART 5: HOMEWARD BOUND

Yet things might have gone far otherwise and far worse… think about what might have been. Dragonfire and savage swords in Eriador, night in Rivendell.

Their quest done, the surviving heroes may return to their respective homelands to rest and heal, while news of their demise in battle is brought to the kinfolk of the fallen.

Have each Player-hero describe their reception when they return home — what do their respective peoples make of the tale? How are the heroes honoured — or do their deeds go unspoken?

What becomes of the sword Estelang? Does the Heir return it to the grave on the western isle?

And, most worrying of all — what of Sauron's other plans? The Orc Snava was but one of the Enemy's spies abroad in Eriador, and he arranged for the slaughter of the Dwarves at Flonar's camp in order to safeguard his secret door into Moria. The loss of the Hill of Fear will not stop Sauron's malice. His war on the Free Peoples of Middle-earth is inevitable, and brings death with it.

But for now, be of good cheer! There is but one way for a mortal to escape the clutches of Amon Guruthos, and it is not with any magic ring or ritual. The great tales shall live on forever, told and retold, and with their deeds in the quest, the heroes have earned their place in the story. Their names shall never die, not so long as tales are told by the fire in the Lone-lands of Eriador.

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The Hill of Fear

Border Lands

Wild Lands

Dark Lands

Impassable Terrain

Perilous Area

1 hex = 20 miles

FORODWAITH
CARN DÛM
ANGMAR
THE LONE-LANDS
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MT. GRAM
NORTH DOWNS
ETTENMOORS
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HOLLIN
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WEST GATE
EAST GATE
MORIA
OST-IN-EDHIL
THARBAD
6
SWANFLEET
LORIEN
MINHIRIATH
ENEDWAITH
NORTH-SOUTH ROAD
DUNLAND
3
LOND DAER
TO GONDOR
FANGORN
ISENGARD
ROHAN

Now they had gone on far into the Lone-lands,
where there were no people left, no inns,
and the roads grew steadily worse.
Not far ahead were dreary hills,
rising higher and higher, dark with trees.
On some of them were old castles with an evil look,
as if they had been built by wicked people.

Tales from the Lone-lands contains six adventures for *The One Ring*™, the official tabletop roleplaying game based on the works of J.R.R. Tolkien. All set in the lone-lands of north-western Middle-earth around the year 1965 of the Third Age, the adventures can be played individually, or as part of a larger tale.

Ancient evils wake as the Dark Lord stretches forth his hand. Over the course of these adventures, the heroes may thwart the spies and stratagems of the Enemy, explore long-lost wonders of the north, and travel far from hearth and home. Preserve the spark of hope, and one day these empty, wounded lands shall be healed! Fail, and all will be destroyed…

FREE LEAGUE

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